

THE LIFE
OF
PRINCIPAL
OLIVER

Mackinnon

08546



ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

THE LIFE OF
PRINCIPAL OLIVER

BX
9225
O5
M15
c.2
HSS



EX LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTENSIS

322
Mack

4901

THE LIFE OF PRINCIPAL OLIVER

THE LIFE OF PRINCIPAL OLIVER

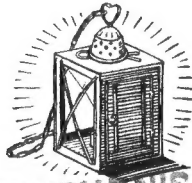
Ph.D., D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.C.

*A Brief Appreciation of Dr. Oliver and His
Work in Relation to the Church and State, the
Religious and Educational Life of the Dominion*

By

REV. CLARENCE MACKINNON, M.A., D.D., LL.D.

PRINCIPAL OF PINE HILL DIVINITY HALL



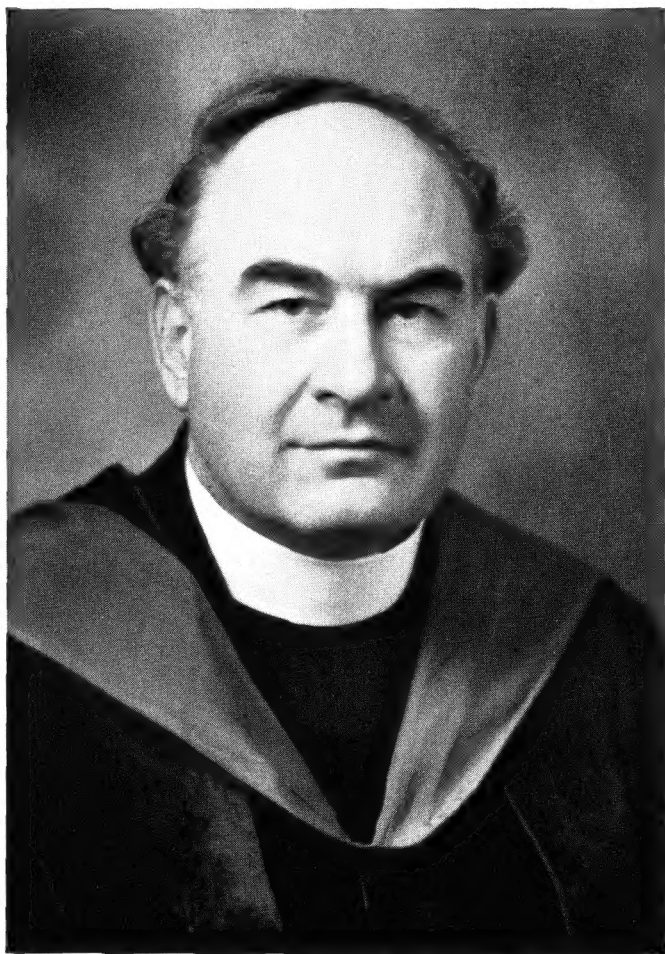
ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE
— LIBRARY —
EDMONTON, ALBERTA

THE RYERSON PRESS ~ TORONTO

COPYRIGHT, CANADA, 1936, BY
THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

PRINTED AND BOUND IN CANADA
BY THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



THE VERY REV. EDMUND H. OLIVER, D.D.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	FOREWORD - - - -	vii
	By Walter C. Murray, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.C., President of the University of Saskatchewan	
I.	THE HOME - - - -	1
II.	SCHOOL DAYS - - - -	15
III.	THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO -	24
IV.	THE WEST - - - -	43
V.	SASKATCHEWAN - - - -	62
VI.	AT THE WAR - - - -	90
VII.	CHURCH UNION IN CANADA -	111
VIII.	PRINCIPAL AND MODERATOR -	134
IX.	CLOSING DAYS - - - -	155

Foreword

Could one imagine a greater succession of hardships and discouragements? And yet through these difficulties and hardships he rose to greatness because of his courage, his ability, his amazing energy and the sincerity and intensity of his Christian faith.

This little volume, begun at the entreaty of friends, continued during the pressure of the closing days of the college year and completed in the intervals between speaking engagements, extending from Virginia to Newfoundland, will ever remain the tribute of a great friendship, a friendship whose beauty and depth recalls that of David for Jonathan, and Damon for Pythias.

WALTER C. MURRAY.

SASKATOON,
July 10, 1936.

The Life of Principal Oliver

CHAPTER I

THE HOME

*Our sires—brave hearts that crossed estranging seas,
And broke the hush of the primeval wood,
Who lit their candles in the solitude,
And met the saffron morn upon their knees—
What though their homes were void of luxuries,
Learning ne'er begged, nor altars smokeless stood,
Nor Cheer nor Friendship lacked the joys their rude,
Kind, log-heaped hearths could give. It is to these
I bare my head! They wrought without the aid
Invention brings, ere smoke of Industry
Hung o'er these hills and vales: with care they made
This place a garden of the mind; and we,
Cradled in comfort, now bid mem'ry hold
The fragrance of their lives in jars of gold.*

—ALEXANDER LOUIS FRASER.

A LARGE auditorium in Saskatchewan was crowded to the doors. The seats were lined with men whose sun-tanned faces and horny hands betokened the rough struggle of the pioneer and his triumph over nature. These were the men who had broken the prairie sod, conquered its loneliness, faced its fierce heat in summer and its bitter chill in winter, and were converting its vast solitudes into the granary of an empire. They were assembled to

The Life of Principal Oliver

receive guidance in their difficulties and light upon the problems of markets and transportation. On the platform were ranged the leading agricultural magnates of the Province, and beside them a young man with a round, cheerful countenance, a twinkle in his eye, a restless energy in his manner, who, the whisper that went round indicated, was the new professor President Walter Murray had secured for the university, the first buildings of which were appearing on the campus at Saskatoon. Farmers are incurably sceptical. The professor might know the names of the Greek gods and have a varied assortment of learning, but all more or less remote from the point at issue, the farm problem of Saskatchewan. So the greater lights held the rostrum. But the young man's turn came at last.

The walls of the building were lined with agricultural advertisements. Massey-Harris, Cockshutt, McCormick, displayed their wares. Amongst others was a large prominent sign, "Oliver Ploughs." With a twinkle in his eye the speaker, on rising, pointed to the sign, and then significantly to himself, and said, "'Oliver ploughs.'" (A ripple of laughter.) I was brought up on two dun cows and a barrel churn. (Applause.) The scent of the soil is in my nostrils," and Dr. Oliver had won Saskatchewan. Instinctively the Western farmer discerned a kindred spirit and, when the youthful orator had resumed his seat amidst rounds of applause, it was felt that a leader had come who

could understand his struggles, strengthen his resolution, comfort him in his disappointments, and in all things "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way."

From that day until the long sorrowing cortège conveyed his dust to its last resting-place, the West loved, honoured and trusted Dr. Oliver and enshrined him in a special place in its heart.

Only from the farm could such a leader come; and, like many another man famous in Canadian annals, it was a farm in old Ontario that gave him birth. The County of Kent, now a summer paradise of ripening grain fields and waving orchards, was once, so the geologists tell us, the sediment of an ancient lake, formed by the huge glaciers that blocked all exit to the north. But a more genial epoch came. The ice melted, the rivers drained the lake, and there lay bare to the sunshine the fine silted soil, subsequently to become the agricultural wealth of Western Ontario. In time vegetation spread its variegated carpet over the scene and enriched it with its decaying humus. Then followed the giants of the forest, the pine, the hemlock, the fir, the spruces, and in groves, the familiar hardwoods, the maple, the oak, the birches, all these giving shelter in their branches to the feathered tribes of Canada, and in their gloomy shadows providing haunts for the wild life of the woods. The only vestiges of the geologic past were numerous swamps lined by their drooping alders.

The Life of Principal Oliver

Into these lonely and forbidding solitudes came the adventurous pioneer about a hundred years ago. Into the district called Caledonia Settlement, about eight miles from the present flourishing city of Chatham, came, particularly, immigrants from Scotland. The majority of those who spoke Gaelic were from the straths and glens of Argyleshire, MacVicars, MacKays, Campbells, McIsaacs and others. Their ancestors had been bred on the lonely moorlands, and upon the slopes of those awe-inspiring mountains, round which curled the angry clouds driven inland from the stormy Atlantic. They were quick, imaginative, passionate, intense in both their loves and hates, hospitable and loyal to the last drop of their blood. To the Lowlanders belonged the Simpsons, Forsythes, Starks, with the Robertsons as a good "go between." These Lowlanders were more practical, more restrained, and with perhaps more definite concentration on their affairs. The business of migration was a very absorbing one, and it is told of one of them that when he was leaving his home in Stirlingshire, he had placed the green-painted cradle, in which six of his family had been rocked, on the top of the load carrying his effects, a cheering omen for a new world; but, unhappily, as the cart passed down the village street, the cradle was caught in the spreading branches of an old beech tree, and left suspended. The mother cried out to stop; the father was obdurate. "There will be cradles where we are

going," he muttered, as he drove on, recalling the saying of Barrie, "There is no more impressive sight than a Scotchman on the make."

Religion was the chief concern of the new Caledonia Settlement in Ontario, and all the more so since it was predominantly Presbyterian. Indeed, so intense was its feeling, that all the discords of the Motherland, absolutely irrelevant to the problems of a new world, were reflected in the heated conversation around the blazing hearth in the log cabin on the remote clearing. And soon on the MacVicar farm arose a primitive "Free Church," whose walls echoed to arguments on "Non-intrusion," "The Headship of Christ," "Erastianism," and other passionate appeals, voices long since grown silent in the distance of time. But denominational interests were not, unfortunately, the only cause of dispute. There has been no more fertile source of quarrels among Presbyterians, and doubtless others, than the choice of a church site, especially in those days when there were no paved roads or motor cars to overcome the inconveniences of distance. The MacVicar church was outgrown, but the MacVicar family wanted it replaced by a modern structure on the same site. The Simpsons wished it farther down the road. The closing years of the Free Church were noisy with this local controversy, and at the Union of 1875 it was left as an unpleasant legacy to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The spirit of union in the air was inadequate for the dispute. The

The Life of Principal Oliver

breach did not heal. Two buildings went up a mile apart, in ecclesiastical reports bearing the pretentious titles of "Knox" and "Chalmers," but in popular parlance called the "MacVicar" and "Simpson" churches. A typical reminiscence comes down to us from those stormy gatherings. A kindly disposed minister, much scandalized by this groundless feud, endeavoured to mitigate what he regarded as "the contumacy of the Simpson party." Alas, his good intentions were unavailing, and losing his patience at last and pointing the finger of rebuke at the offending persons, he said, "Brethren, you are wicked to persist in this strife." "No, no, sir," interrupted a voice, "not wicked, only Scotch."

Strength, however, has its noble side, if sometimes it may be a little too pertinacious. From both these homes of the MacVicars and the Simpsons came remarkable products. In those days when, "a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees," one wonders whether John MacVicar returning in the twilight with the gleaming instrument on his shoulder, rejoicing in his vigour, though perhaps a little resentful of the Lowland Simpsons, entering his home and seeing his wife crooning in Gaelic to the two little laddies in their cots, ever dreamed what one day they would become. Little Donald there, with his head asleep upon his arm, is to be the honoured Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College at Montreal, and little Malcolm, the first Chancellor of McMaster

The Home

University at Toronto, maintaining in perfectly brotherly accord their happy relationships, but also, by a clearly inherited disposition, their unswerving adherence to their respective opinions to the very end.

Nor, on the other hand, is the Simpson home less memorable. From its pious, if at times somewhat tense, religious atmosphere came Dr. A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian Alliance, with its stress on missions and also on Divine healing. He had a compelling power of appeal. Never were there such missionary collections as he could gather from audiences in Boston and New York. He established his own college, graduating nearly two hundred a year. His influence was world wide, and nowhere was his name more revered and beloved than among the natives of Africa or in the lonely parts of the Asiatic continent.

Into this community, not overly rich in worldly goods, it may be, but virile in body, mind and spirit, drifted a young lad from England, who bore the name of John Oliver. He came about the middle of last century, and a few years later he sealed his adoption into the life of the place by marrying Mary Mackay, and began to hew out for himself a homestead in "the forest primeval," just where the Caledonia Road crosses the 7th Concession. Their eldest son, George, was born in 1853, and he in turn married Rhoda Elizabeth Stark, the eldest of a family of fourteen that had come to settle on the

The Life of Principal Oliver

Prince Albert Road. The marriage was performed by the Rev. Donald Currie, who presented the bride with a Bible as a wedding present, of which we shall hear again. The young couple began their simple housekeeping in a log cabin on the Oliver farm. It was the familiar story known all across Canada two generations ago, plenty to do and few of the luxuries and indulgences, so indispensable to the youth of to-day. Farther fields had to be cleared, huge trees to be hewn down, their tough stumps to be uprooted. Crops had to be put in with the spade, where the plough was impracticable; the harvest must be reaped with a "cradle." It was laborious work, the back of the pioneer became often bent, but "the muscles of his brawny arms were strong as iron bands." There were compensations, too, that "they that dwell in King's houses" can never know. Resourcefulness, courage, determination, invaluable gifts, which the best-endowed university cannot impart, were indigenous to the farm, and became the native possession of those who went forth from it "to play the man" in the wider arena of public life. Six children were born to these industrious and upright parents, three boys and three girls. The oldest was John, afterwards known as Major Oliver of Winnipeg, the second was named Edmund, though from his unusual precocity (he could talk plainly at ten months and walk very early), and from his untiring restlessness nicknamed "fussy Benny." Once a friend offered him twenty-five

cents if he would sit still for five minutes. Edmund won the money. It was this boundless energy, combined with unusual powers of self-restraint, that was to stand him in good stead in after days when the heavy hand of misfortune and destitution fell on the Provinces of Western Canada, and when his personal force and eloquence aroused the rest of the Dominion, and his sane judgment directed the generous response to his appeal into the most effective channels.

How much we owe to the first impressions of childhood is a matter of vigorous debate among our learned psychologists, but all seem to be agreed that the earliest environment leaves its lasting effect on the human mind. For one thing, it supplies material for the imagination; and the literature of the imagination is the literature of power, and not least the power of the orator. On one side of the home was an extensive orchard, and one can readily conceive the charm of this romantic spot with its brilliant display of blossom in the springtime and its tempting mellow fruit in the autumn. This orchard had one mysterious memory for Edmund when he was a lad. It was the face of a neighbour hurrying through the trees with the hoarse whisper, "Sir John is dead." Who Sir John A. Macdonald was, and why the neighbour's voice should be so deep and hoarse, he could not tell; but he realized that something resembling an earthquake had taken place. Nor could he quite be sure that the intensity

The Life of Principal Oliver

of the neighbour's announcement was entirely due to grief.

In front of the house was the flower garden; there grew the fascinating orange lilies, one could look at but must not touch with the hands; and there the ten commandments came seriously into play and the terrors of Mount Sinai. On the further side was the sunny lane, where the children loved to play. Here stood the "milk stand," and on it on a warm summer Sunday evening they would gather and under the leadership of the mother sing those hymns, which enter by such pleasant gateways so far into the human spirit, that Wesley is reported to have said, "Let me but write the hymns of a people and I care not who shapes its creed." So lustily did they sing that in the calm evening air their childish voices seemed to fill the sky. Another object of weird interest was the well, with its slippery sides and its cool gloomy depths, down which the voice awakened an awesome echo. There was the long pole, too, with the bucket at one end and a bell at the other, waiting to sound the dinner hour with an authority that needed no enforcing.

Beyond the house and the steading stretched the ploughed fields and the pasture lands, and away beyond these again were the wandering mazes of the forest, the home of many strange creatures, where one was not allowed to go alone, and where one always entered with a weird feeling of awe. The

The Home

memories of an old Ontario farm are a priceless heritage to a man of wit and imagination.

How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view.
The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wild-wood,
And every loved spot which my infancy knew;
The wide spreading pond and the mill which stood by it,
The bridge and the rock where the cataract fell;
The cot of my father, the dairy house nigh it,
And e'en the rude bucket which hung in the well,—
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,
The moss-covered bucket that hung in the well.

The gracious influence pervading that home was the mother. She was a Christian woman of patience and tact; and it must be admitted that these graces were not unnecessary, for little Edmund had a will of his own, that in any other book than a biography might be classed as stubborn at times. Once when a little girl baby arrived, there followed the usual family discussion as to the name. The choice lay between Mabel and Alice. The family chose Mabel, but Edmund preferred Alice, and when the others in the bedtime liturgy would say, "God bless Mabel," he would join in with his own version, "God bless Alice,"—first traces of an unbending ecclesiastic! On one occasion the prayers and faith of the mother were severely tried. Little "Benny" lay on the very verge of life with a dangerous illness. The doctor had shaken his head and gone away, but for the mother, while there was life, there was

The Life of Principal Oliver

hope. She seized every known remedy which tradition or gossip suggested, and applied them all in a manner that would have made a medical faculty stand aghast. It mattered not. "Benny" opened his eyes and came back. Her faith had triumphed.

Sunday was, of course, the great day in this Christian home, and every Sunday was "Mother's Day." With what a delightful warmth and peacefulness the summer sun would peep in at the window! No work to be done, no lessons to be learned, except the little passage for the Sunday School. Church was the one solemn obligation of the day. From it there was no exemption, nor indeed was there ever any thought of it. Even the infant in arms was duly carried across the way to the "Simpson" church, where it slept on its mother's knee until it was considered able to maintain an erect position on the unrelenting upright pews. The rest of the family wriggled in beside them, and preserved a sedate composure both from awe of the sacred place and also from a very definite and "experimental" knowledge of what delinquency would bring. Doctrinal sermons were not uncommon, some even on Predestination, but it may be assumed that the juvenile mind did not expend much time on fathoming these intricacies. Probably the little sisters were much more absorbed in the erratic movements of the restless black objects that bobbed incessantly on the ladies' bonnets of those days; while the lads

The Home

doubtless kept the grave precentor and his tuning-fork under close surveillance with an occasional glance at the nodding head of the redoubtable elder who had withstood the introduction of an organ into the "kirk"; though whether the head nodded in approval of some weighty point in the sermon or only from an insidious somnolence, it might not be always easy to decide.

The Church, the Sabbath and the Bible were the great formative influences in the home. They left as an abiding legacy a profound reverence for the sacred side of life. Quite touching is the reference that Dr. Oliver, when he was Moderator, made to his mother's Bible, the one she received from her minister on her wedding day.

On Christmas morning there hung on the Christmas tree in my home a little parcel neatly wrapped in ribbon and white tissue paper. To my great surprise—for nowadays Santa Claus brings me only handkerchiefs and socks—one of my boys announced that my name was written on the gift. When I opened it, the tears started to my eyes. The magic wand of memory rolled back the long years, as I looked at the old familiar leather-covered volume. It was my mother's Bible sent me from my sister. She wrote:

"I feel you ought to have this Bible, which you will recognize as Mother's . . . a wedding present. . . . Mother gave it to me many, many years ago because I liked it and used to love the sort of pocket inside the cover. . . . I feel that Mother would like you to have it in your present position particularly, so I pass it on to your keeping. Some of the heavy marks are old

The Life of Principal Oliver

ones of mine, but I like to feel that she made the one in 2 Tim. 4, and I am sure you will, too."

And there it stands, after all these years, that mark against those verses, a message to me from the little mother who had long since gone home: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word." As I read those challenging words I could hear the evening breeze sighing in the leaves of the apple trees of the old Ontario orchard, and I could glimpse once more the light of the old farm lamp shining on that dear face, which I have loved long since and lost awhile. I could also feel the gentle touch of the vanished hand and I was sure that the voice that is now for ever still, if it could but speak, would, after all these years, have the same message for her country boy—who now carried heavier responsibilities—"Preach the word, my boy, preach the word. Be instant in season, out of season." It was no ordinary book, that Bible of my mother's. It was the Gibraltar of her faith. It was the source of her heart's strength. She had learned from it how to tithe her little income from eggs and butter. She had gathered from that same leather-covered book the mission spirit that ever burned within her soul. She knew where to get a verse for every difficulty and a line for every grief. She told me once how in a great crisis she sat through the long hours of the night in the old log home on the concession expecting me as a little lad each moment to pass away. There must be one of the passages somewhere marked for her strengthening on that night—if I could only find it. To her the Book meant life, life that was victory over sin, victory over death, and what is sometimes harder to achieve, victory over self. Above all, for her the Book meant the only sure safe guidance for her girls and boys.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL DAYS

*And if I chance to fall below
Demosthenes or Cicero
Don't view me with a critic's eye,
But pass my imperfections by.
Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow.*

—D. EVERETT

IN the early pioneer's cabin in Old Ontario, where the column of blue smoke rose perpendicular in the clear morning air, and the population could be estimated by the number of "these smokes," the filling of the cradle brought with it many and complicated problems. First, the insatiable and ever restless little bodies had to be filled, and then they had to be clothed. Industry and deftness could meet these needs. But what about the mind? Who was to fill it, and how was it to be trained? At first the parents wrestled bravely with the task. The father would scratch his sleepy head and try to recall the way that sum in arithmetic had been worked out. The mother would reach back into the limbo of forgetfulness for the haunting jingle of some old poem that just eluded her, the catch of some half-remembered melody. A book was a rarity; there was no press. What was available was commandeered; and yet with what pathetic pangs of distress would the parents see their little urchins

The Life of Principal Oliver

grow up in the wilderness with more the knowledge and craft of an Indian than of a privileged descendant of the British Isles. The Scotch settlements in particular felt deeply this mental destitution, for they had made a proud boast of the tradition of their homeland, the policy of their redoubtable Reformer, John Knox, who had planned "a church and a schoolhouse in every parish," that upon these twin pillars of integrity and intelligence he might rear the fabric of his country's greatness; and they brought with them, too, into the wilderness, memories of the old "Dominie" whom they had left so far away, and of his joy at "anither scholar in the land"; and alas, here in an environment of stumps, what chance for such a future?

The Canadian genius, however, is not one that simply sits down and folds its idle hands in the presence of even such formidable problems as this. Under the pressure of the situation, and under the skilled leadership of some noble leaders, in whose ranks can now be proudly numbered such opposing warriors as Bishop Strachan and Dr. Egerton Ryerson, a more perfect system of instruction began to take place. The old soldier, who was "farmed" around the settlement, and "taught school," and was more of a drill sergeant than an educator, gave his farewell salute and disappeared, leaving the ferule to some bright young enthusiast from the new Normal School at Toronto. The American textbooks, so riling to the intensely patriotic soul

School Days

of Ontario with their foreign "dialect and idiom," also made their unlamented exit. The suspicion, too, that knowledge might bring with it "republican ideas," had long since vanished away. The road was cleared for the efficient system of education that now obtains in Canada's premier Province. The road was clear, but it was a long time before adequate means became available.

A schoolhouse had been erected on the Oliver farm, just a short distance from the orchard where the bees hummed so busily in the springtime, and where the ripened fruit brought such a perennial boyish delight in the autumn, and thither the little Oliver children, all duly washed and dressed and with their slates and what books were obtainable, made their daily pilgrimage. The building was not attractive. It was small, hot, stuffy, dusty, and greatly overcrowded, with sometimes as many as eighty pupils, all to be instructed in their several grades by the brave young girl who had been engaged for this herculean task. The age of miracles is surely not past, when one reviews the products that have come from these unlikely seats of learning. Miss A. W. Wark was Edmund's first teacher and, many years after, when he was chosen Moderator of The United Church of Canada, she wrote to him from Vancouver to offer her congratulations:

As I read the little bit of biography in *The New Outlook* of September 24th, memory's swift flight brought me to a

The Life of Principal Oliver

little schoolhouse set on a crossroads' corner, opposite a Presbyterian church and adjacent to the school a little home, nestling beside a fine old apple orchard that the spring robed in dainty fragrant garments of pink and white, when the bees hummed in a huge orchestra the whole day long. The family who lived in this home and with whom I boarded for nearly a year, bore the name of Oliver, and in it I remember was a little brown-eyed boy named Edmund, an older boy and a younger sister.

But the memories were not all on the part of the schoolmistress. There is no affection more disinterested, none more touching than that of the little laddie for his teacher, though he may have tormented her very life with his restless activities; and the future Moderator never forgot the kindly lady who taught him first his letters; and half a century later, when he met her again in Vancouver, he wrote:

She was my first teacher in old School Section No. 6, Chatham township, and taught me when I was five years of age. She had lived in our home for nearly a year. I never knew what became of her, but through all these years I had cherished the vision of a beautiful woman with just a touch of auburn in her hair, who had played the little organ in our old sitting-room in the log house where I was born.

But the limited and happy world that had sheltered him so far was now to push him forth into a broader life. The Mecca of boyhood's dreams was the neighbouring town of Chatham, then a centre of growing importance with nascent industries

and a population of some ten or twelve thousand, but to the fascinated eyes of a little lad possessing all the charms and wonderment of a modern metropolis. Often had he seen his father leave in the early morning with his load for the market, and oft had he run to meet him when he returned at evening with some new toy or sweetmeat to fill the happy home with fresh delight. Then came the auspicious day when he himself was allowed to climb into the waggon and encounter for the first time the marvels of an urban life, the busy streets, the ceaseless hum of the endless passersby, the jostling of the carts, the prancing steeds of some gay and stylish outfit, the first hints of the grim economic problem, then the long row of "stores" with such tempting articles in their windows, that were bound to follow one far into one's dreams, and then at last the lamps, and the weird arc lights that flickered and sputtered overhead and shed their blue, unnatural rays over a veritable *Midsummer Night's Dream* as, with a quickened trot, their kindly horse took the familiar road for home. What Miklegarde was to the ancient Norseman, and El Dorado had been to the Spanish adventurer, Chatham had been to childhood's fancy. But now he must go and live there, for Edmund was eleven, and he had passed his entrance to the collegiate; and his wise and self-denying father and mother, recognizing his unusual gift, had resolved that, whatever the privation or sacrifice entailed, nothing should stand

The Life of Principal Oliver

in the way of his career. So to Chatham Edmund Oliver came to dwell.

Despite all the charms of this novel town life it was a lonesome and very homesick little scholar that crept into bed in his uncle's house and often cried into the night. Mrs. (Principal) Davidson recalls his first days at the collegiate and describes him as "small for his age, with large head and heavy shock of black hair, a curly lock on top; tight knee breeches, and exceedingly shy." There were perhaps grounds for this shyness. The town lads had naturally a "superiority complex." They had had greater advantages, very likely spent more pocket money. The teachers had lived in the same streets with them and been long acquainted. Then, in the matter of sports, the little lad from the farm, who could fish and hunt and shoot, who knew the haunts of the wild life in the woods and was master of a hundred arts that many people who live in our large cities to-day would part with much to possess, felt himself sadly handicapped because he could not "play ball" like those other chaps who had been at it from their infancy. So Edmund was shy, and kept aloof from games. But when the results of the examinations were announced, and the young scholar from the farm was discovered to be first in all his classes, a new feeling of respect pervaded the collegiate. The failures said that he "plugged," and so no doubt he did, but what they were unable

to discern was the joyous awakening of his eager mind. He had caught vistas of new strange worlds of knowledge to conquer, vast areas where he might roam in pursuit of truth and power, and what were the fleeting triumphs on the field of sport compared with acquisitions such as these? He was a reflective lad, and realized that if ever he was to enter these alluring regions he had now the one chance that life would bring. So Edmund "plugged" on.

A quick and fertile imagination seems to have been easily intrigued by the mystic value of algebra and its untold possibilities. "I can do sums with letters," he shouted gleefully on his first visit home after his introduction into this new art. And if Goschen in his great lecture on "The Imagination" could cite the dry pages of Adam Smith as among its most notable expressions in English Literature, because behind the dreary facts of economics he could see the universal principles that govern human activity in operation, may we not also trace in this fondness for mathematics the first dawns of that unusual power, so evident in Dr. Oliver in later life, the power to discern and appreciate those forces that rule the religious and social life of man? The love of Classics is not usually blended with fondness for Mathematics. Augustine said that "One and one make two" was a wearisome song to him, but that he delighted in the "Wooden horse of Troy and Creusa's sad similitude." With Oliver

The Life of Principal Oliver

the two seemed to go hand in hand. Curiously enough, the one study that he is said to have disliked was English Composition, the very art in which he excelled so conspicuously in after years, his sermons and addresses being in this regard among the best of any contemporary public man in Canada. Probably something must have been amiss in his approach to it, perhaps too many arbitrary rules; for the apt arrangement and music of words were like a second nature to him.

These patient and unremitting studies were only broken by his delightful week-end visits to his home. Shortly after he had gone to the collegiate, the Oliver family abandoned the old log cabin and built a new brick house on the Prince Albert Road; and every Friday night the faithful horse would be found waiting at the railway crossing to bring the two brothers home; for both were now in Chatham. How wonderfully restful and ennobling the Sunday spent in that Christian abode, and what imperishable memories it left! What fresh incentive it gave to assume again the scholar's burden on Monday morning!

So the five years at the collegiate quickly passed. They had been very strenuous; perhaps too much so. During the final examinations he became quite ill and had to be supported with pillows in the conveyance that brought him back to town. His devoted mother watched him with unceasing care and tended every need. But the results crowned his labours

School Days

with a brilliant success. He was head boy, he had won the Wilson Gold Medal for general proficiency, he ranked first in the Province in Classics and Mathematics, and thereby won the coveted Edward Blake Scholarship that opened the path to a university career.

Dr. Oliver's brothers and sisters are: Major John P. Oliver, of Winnipeg; Mabel, Mrs. Robert Miller, London, Ontario; Rev. George W. Oliver, Oil Springs, Ontario; Mary, Mrs. Frank P. Lloyd, Cobourg, Ontario; Elizabeth, Mrs. W. D. Colby, Chatham, Ontario.

CHAPTER III

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

*There studious let me sit,
And hold high converse with the mighty dead;
Sages of ancient time, as gods revered,
As gods beneficent, who blest mankind
With arts, with arms, and humanized a world.*

—J. THOMSON

AS Oliver was to play an important role in both the educational and religious life of the Dominion, some account of the vexed circumstances that accompanied its development is essential, if its problems are to be properly understood. Toronto University, which the young ardent student was now about to enter, had been the storm centre of all the bitter controversies; and it would be "the play of Hamlet without the part of Hamlet," if educational and ecclesiastical questions in Canada were discussed without some knowledge of the struggles that shaped that noble and historic institution. The following brief sketch must therefore not be regarded as a mere digression.

When General Wolfe, dropping softly down the St. Lawrence River on the eve of his fateful victory, whispered the line, ever since familiar to Canadian schoolboys,

The path of glory leads but to the grave,
and when, next morning, on the Plains of Abraham he finished his own bright and triumphant career,

The University of Toronto

saying, "God be thanked, I die content," he brought an epoch to its close; the ancient régime with its romance and chivalry, the domination of France in the New World and, indeed, its dream of world empire with its exact and elegant speech accepted as the universal language of mankind. But while much was ended, many new and perplexing problems had just emerged. The foremost of these inevitably was how two people of different race, speech, tradition and religion, the English and the French, separated by the memories of many bitter wars, could live together in peace upon the same soil. Never has the British genius, reinforced as always by a generous sentiment of fair play, secured a more notable triumph. There have been hard nuts to crack, conflicting claims to be adjusted, suspicions and jealousies to be allayed; nevertheless one hundred and seventy-seven years have passed, the French and English still continue to live happy and contented lives in this fair Dominion of ours under the same administration, side by side, with mutual regard for each other's interests and an unaltered respect for the terms of the treaty that brought them together.

At first there was but one Province, and Quebec extended its territory far beyond its present boundaries, beyond Ontario also, and, indeed, included all lands west and north of the Ohio to the Mississippi. As the population was nearly all of the one race, little difficulty ensued. The revolt

The Life of Principal Oliver

of the American colonies, however, drove an increasing number of loyalists to find new homes in the part of the continent still under the British flag. The latent claims of race, language and religion were stirred afresh, and in order to do justice to both sections, Quebec was divided into Upper and Lower Canada, the former English and the latter French. This separation, effected in 1791, continued until 1840, when a further attempt was made to combine them under one administration, but with more than doubtful success until 1867, when Confederation took place and all the Provinces, including the Maritimes, were united in the Dominion of Canada, in which by a fine adjustment of Provincial and Federal rights harmony was at last secured and the British practical genius for compromise and government finally justified.

Our chief interest for the present lies in a provision, made in the Act of 1791, which separated Upper from Lower Canada. It allotted one-seventh of the lands in each Province for the maintenance of religion, and thus gave rise to a bitter contention in Upper Canada, which continued until the middle of the nineteenth century, and was popularly known as the question of the "clergy reserves." In Lower Canada the problem was much easier, as there were only a few Protestants and a satisfactory arrangement was made to meet their demands. But in Upper Canada, where the population was overwhelmingly Protestant, the situation became very

acute, as these Protestants belonged to various denominations, and each of these inevitably pressed its claim for a share in the provision so liberally made in the Act. Chief among these, naturally, was the Church of England, which unhappily laid claim, not to a mere share with the others, but to the whole allocation, on the ground that it was the Established Church of the new country. It is easy for an age like ours, accused of lacking strong convictions, and tolerant to the point of compromising lofty ideals for transitory harmony, to sit in judgment on what it has been pleased to style the bigotry of a bygone time. But it has to be remembered that at the beginning of last century England was winning her way to the foremost place among the nations. Her language was encircling the globe, and her flag was ever being hoisted on fresh territory. With all her faults, and her record was not entirely stainless, she did stand for justice, fair play, and the fulfilment of her obligations. It was felt that the British Isles did have a conscience, keen though their inhabitants were for business and the extension of trade; and it was not unnaturally concluded that this fine idealism was the fruit of her religion, and that this religion found its main expression in the reverent services, restrained emotions, and quiet culture of the Anglican faith. Then there were those public schools: Eton, on whose cricket fields Waterloos were won; Rugby, that was to enrich the teaching profession with an Arnold, whose main

The Life of Principal Oliver

aim and crowning achievement was to produce the English gentleman. It was only to be expected, therefore, that when Englishmen came to found their homes on this new continent, they should wish to establish here the institutions lending a lustre to the land of their birth, that here in the rude log structure carved out of the forest they should repeat their stately service, and that here on the ragged edge of the wilderness, with mean equipment, it might be, but with lofty spirit, they should reproduce the public schools of England. The whole of the clergy reserves was all too small for such a meritorious ambition as this. To divide them were to render the whole project futile. So the Anglican Church laid claim to all.

It was notably assisted in its design by the constitution of the government at that time. When the division was made and the new Provinces were set up, Upper Canada was furnished with two houses, an Assembly whose members were elected by the people, and a Legislative Council, appointed by the Crown and its advisers. As the Legislative Council occupied the place held by the House of Lords in the old land, and had the power of revising and rejecting all bills passed by the lower chamber, and as it became virtually self-selected and dominated by a clique, familiarly known as "the Family Compact," who availed themselves of their position to obtain lucrative posts, and further as it was the unshakable conviction of this governing body that

The University of Toronto

only the loyalty of an Anglican could be relied upon and that all others were the objects of a general suspicion, this powerful body did all that it possibly could to promote the aims of the Church of England, and legally to confirm to it the lands allotted to religion by the statute.

Presbyterians were the first to protest. The Scotch by nature were not disposed to let an opportunity like this go by default. Their contention, too, could not lightly be dismissed. The Church of Scotland was an Established Church. It had its schools and traditions; for had not John Knox foreseen that in every parish there should be a church and school? And had not Scotland made its own worthy contribution to the extension and progress of the Empire? According to its oft-repeated statement, it had at least provided the "heids o' the departments." So the Legislative Council was forced to relent, and the Church of Scotland was admitted to a share of the "reserves." But fast on the heels of "the old Kirk" came the U.P.'s and other fractional bodies, and concessions were granted. Against the Methodists, however, the controlling powers were obdurate. They were regarded as "intruders," and burdened with many disabilities. They could own no real estate, neither site nor cemetery. Nor could they conduct a marriage service. All such religious functions had to be performed by an Anglican or a Presbyterian clergyman. It was stoutly asserted as an excuse

The Life of Principal Oliver

for these limitations that the Methodist ministry was not quite so regular as that of the more dignified and pretentious denominations; that mere local preachers after two years of effective work were ordained as deacons and admitted to the annual conference, and after two more years of service received full ordination as "elders" and became members of the General Conference; and that therefore it was difficult to determine the exact ecclesiastical status of the Methodist pastor. "Man proposes, but God disposes." In whatever manner Legislative Councils might frown on those earnest enthusiasts with their clear and definite aim, the conversion of souls, there could be no doubt how graciously Providence was smiling upon them and blessing their labours. A thrill of excitement would go through a community on the conversion of some notorious sinner, and next Sunday the "meeting" would be crowded. In those pioneer days when the human spirit was not so blasé as it is to-day, the announcement of a "revival" produced a quiet sensation and awakened peculiar expectations: what would be the results? who would be "saved"? who would be restored from his too well-known backslidings? Then came the crowning emotion—the camp-meeting. In the balmy summer weather after "planting" and before "cutting" began, a convenient place in the forest where trails met would be chosen and cleared. On the green stumps planks would be laid for pews. A platform would be

The University of Toronto

erected and behind it a secluded "oratory" for the private devotions of the evangelist before he began his impassioned address; for if anything, the camp-meeting was the place of prayer. In front of the platform, too, was an unusual structure in church architecture. It consisted of two uprights with forked ends and a rude pole laid across, and beneath, a rough plank. It was "the penitent bench," and distinguished the early Methodist from more conventional services. Converts were expected, and they never failed to come. Perhaps it might be in the full glare of the afternoon's sun, or more frequently in the flickering light of the pine-wood torches at the corners of the enclosure, that awakened souls, touched by the fervid appeal, came tremblingly forward. Against a form of religion with so many dramatic and sensational elements, with its stirring hymns and impassioned oratory, the more staid and stately types of worship could make but a feeble stand. By the hundred, people were converted and became Methodists. A striking confirmation of the wide extent of this movement may be seen in the despatch sent by Sir John Colborne to the Colonial Secretary in England and dated 11th April, 1829:

If a more ardent zeal be not shown by the Established Church, and a very different kind of minister than that which is generally to be found in this Province be not sent out from England, it is obvious that the members of the Established Church will be inconsiderable, and

The Life of Principal Oliver

that it will continue to lose ground. The Methodists apparently exceed the number of the Churches of England and Scotland.

The field of education could not, of course, be kept immune from these ecclesiastical dissensions which affected the future course of academic and university life. The perplexing problem had first been encountered in the older Province of Nova Scotia, where on the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War the University of King's College had been established at Windsor. The same English ideals and the same mistaken and narrow policy that the Church of England was to follow in Ontario, had governed its formation and early development. There was the desire to plant in this Western world institutions on the Oxford model that would cultivate the man as well as the mind, but there was also the fatal assumption that to be a loyal Britisher one must needs be an Anglican, and so not only were the whole staff of that religious faith, but every student had to sign the "thirty-nine articles" before he could be admitted to the classes. When disbandment of Highland regiments and migration of evicted crofters from the straths and glens of Scotland brought a large influx of Presbyterians to the Province, these found themselves debarred from the privileges of higher education, and under the able leadership of Dr. Thomas McCulloch an agitation was set on foot that resulted first in the

The University of Toronto

founding of Pictou Academy, which, under that modest title, the only one permitted, really taught university subjects, and finally, in the creation of Dalhousie University in Halifax, through the wise policy of the Earl of Dalhousie, the governor, who provided the endowment from funds obtained in Maine during the War of 1812-1814. Dalhousie imposed no tests, but encountered such strong and subtle opposition that it never got effectively under way until 1863. The denominational interests in the meantime became firmly intrenched and to-day there are no less than eight colleges in the Maritime Provinces conferring the B.A. degree, although it should be stated that four of these are Roman Catholic.

Nova Scotia was, however, too far away from Ontario for its misadventures to have any salutary influence, even though the educational problems were at heart very similar. In the end Ontario is to be congratulated on a happier final solution, and on the possession of universities that rank among the finest on the continent. The story of this educational development is full of interest and profit. Governor Simcoe conceived quite early the idea of a number of district High Schools, culminating in a Provincial University. The defect of the scheme, as afterwards revealed, lay in the failure to provide an adequate system of elementary schools, which would feed the institutions of higher learning. In the meantime, however, the Governor pursued his

The Life of Principal Oliver

policy; and it is interesting to note that the first educationalist invited to put it into effect was the Rev. Thomas Chalmers of Scotland, who unfortunately declined the offer. When one considers the extraordinary gifts of this distinguished Scotsman, how subsequently he became the leader of the Disruption and the organizer of the Free Church, how he could sway vast multitudes by his unrivalled eloquence, how even in the classroom of New College, of which he was the honoured principal, he could daily draw applause from crowded audiences, and in every way was regarded as the most outstanding figure of his age in his native land, and how to-day, after all these years, in all the large cities of Canada there is still a "Chalmers Church," it is difficult to refrain from speculating what would have been the trend of education in the Dominion, if the massive genius of this rarely gifted leader had been secured for the work. But speculating with "if's" and "and's" is a futile task.

When Chalmers declined, the choice next fell on a very different type of educational leader, but one who left in his own stormy way a very marked impression on the schools and colleges of his adopted land, John Strachan, at the time only a humble schoolmaster in Scotland. Born at Aberdeen, trained in classics in King's College and afterwards at St. Andrew's with a view to the Presbyterian ministry, he had temporarily stepped aside for economic reasons to serve a brief period as a teacher,

until the way opened up for him again to follow his chosen calling. It was at this crisis that the invitation from Canada arrived. But unfortunately he had hardly set foot on these shores before Governor Simcoe left the country, and his ambitious educational policy was abandoned. The indomitable young teacher was not to be dismayed. At Kingston and Cornwall he opened schools, where some of the future leading citizens of Canada received their first inspiration. Then, under the influence of Archdeacon Stuart, he turned his face to the Church of England. His promotion was rapid and phenomenal. Ordained deacon, priest, appointed to a mission at Cornwall, transferred to the rectory of York, made chaplain to the Legislative Council, then member of the Legislative Council, he at last attained the summit of his career and was consecrated first Bishop of Toronto. He possessed an extraordinary tenacity of purpose and an unfaltering zeal for the Church of England, among whose leaders he still holds a venerated place. But his was a heroic and vain struggle against the nascent spirit of the new world. Manfully he fought to maintain the privileges of one Established Church and one system of higher education closely linked with the faith and policy of that church. But "dissent," as he would term it, was too prevalent for him, for reasons described in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter. Yet he never accepted defeat, nor did he ever permit his own personal

The Life of Principal Oliver

advantage to interfere with loyalty to his principles; and his great objective, though in a limited measure, stands realized in the stately edifice of Trinity College on the Toronto campus.

Dr. Strachan was the first organizer of the University of Toronto, not then known by that name; but the institution took a very different road from that which the founder had intended for it. He began with King's College, to be supported by lands assigned by the government, and to be strictly Anglican. All members of its governing council were to belong to that Communion; so was the president, and he was to be a clergyman. The Bishop was to be the official visitor, and the degree of Doctor of Divinity confined to the ministry in the Church of England. Even the most tolerant Christian charity on the part of the other churches could hardly be expected to acquiesce in conditions in a Provincial University so glaringly sectarian. The battle was on. Inch by inch the uncompromising doctor had to retreat until in 1850 the whole institution was reorganized under the new name of The University of Toronto. Religious control disappeared. King's College became University College, and the indomitable Dr. Strachan withdrew, though with amazing alacrity and zeal founding Trinity College, where without let or hindrance his educational ideals could have full sway. In the meantime, however, the controversy had worked irreparable havoc. Despairing of

The University of Toronto

impartial recognition in a provincial university, the Presbyterians had established Queen's at Kingston, and the Methodists, Victoria at Cobourg.

With the removal of injustices and disabilities the storm of contention began to abate, and under the pressure of hard economic conditions a more reasonable frame of mind appeared in the counsels of the churches. To compete with a government supported institution would clearly be soon beyond their resources. Queen's indeed held on as a Presbyterian university until the beginning of the present century, when it had to capitulate, sever its connection with the church and apply to the Province for financial assistance. Victoria, lending an ear to saner advice, accepted a plan of federation and, in 1889, what Sir Robert Falconer calls the *annus mirabilis*, moved to the campus at Toronto. This important decision really constituted the University of Toronto as it is known to-day. Other colleges followed, and a breadth of interest was created and a far-reaching influence developed that has greatly exceeded the wildest dreams of the early promoters of higher education in the Province of Ontario.

During the nineties, therefore, the campus at Toronto was seething with these recent movements and ideas; fresh buildings were going up every year. Old disputes were finding their quietus. University College was ceasing to sniff at Victoria, and Victoria was quietly veiling an asceticism that might be a

The Life of Principal Oliver

provoking rebuke to student practices such as smoking and dancing, that have been associated with the campus of every large university.

Now it was into the aftermath of all these controversies and their happy solution that young Oliver came, when on a bright afternoon in early autumn, in company with his mother, he took his first walk across the green lawns on which the new buildings of the university were busily going up. There can be no doubt that the environment of a student, which silently penetrates his being at every pore, has as much to do with his future career as his more formal studies, the books that he borrows from the library or the lectures that he attends in the classroom. Particularly must this have been so with Oliver, who subsequently developed such a flair for history, and who was familiar with every detail of the story that has just been related. Here no doubt was cultivated his broad outlook, that made him a leader in all movements towards co-operation and unity in after days, and also that sympathetic gift of understanding an opponent's point of view, that so strongly marked his leadership in controversial questions. It is true that on the campus the "sectarian" could still find a secluded corner under the auspices of his own favourite church where he could foster without gainsay or interference the peculiar flower and fruitage of his cherished creed. But a broader atmosphere reigned outside, should he choose to breathe it.

The University of Toronto

So far, however, as specific studies were concerned, Classics claimed his immediate attention; for, as noted above, he had not only won at the Chatham Collegiate the Matthew Wilson Gold Medal for general proficiency, but ranked first in the Province in Classics and Mathematics. It was therefore natural that he should follow the course his talents indicated as the most advisable. In 1898-1899 he was enrolled in the honour courses in Classics, English, and History (Classical option), and the fruits of these studies were in evidence throughout his future public life. This highly specialized classical training gave him that discriminating use of words that made him a master in discussion; his delight in English supplied those happy phrases, with which at times he could astonish and dazzle an audience; while a minute knowledge of history and a command of its principles enabled him to make those invaluable contributions to the knowledge of his country found in his published works and, perhaps even more important still, in the carefully sifted and classified storehouse of facts, now preserved in the archives of St. Andrew's College at Saskatoon. He was a prodigious worker. Dr. Wylie C. Clark writes of him:

Oliver had an abundance of natural ability, but his power lay in the amount and kind of work that he could do. He could sit at his desk for fifteen hours a day and never idle five minutes. He imposed work on himself; (referring to his later life) he had his lectures prepared

The Life of Principal Oliver

two years ahead, so if anything came up he could give full time to it. He was constantly preparing to be ready to meet the future. This may have been because he was ambitious; but rather I think that he could not bear that a situation would arise and he would find himself unable to cope with it. In dealing with any subject he wanted to exhaust it. He seemed to strive to pull out the very roots of a matter and be willing to do the necessary digging.

Such indeed was the young student in the first flush of his college days, throwing his soul into it. But alas, even hard work is not proof against the unhappy vicissitudes of life. Rev. Chas. Draper of Beamsville writes:

On March 6th before eight o'clock (and that was getting dangerously near exams), he called me up. He was in trouble, he had the mumps, the weather was bitterly cold, and his landlady was determined that he must get out. She and her sister were afraid they might catch the trouble from him. I promised to call on him as soon as my morning lectures were over. I did so. But before my arrival Rutherford (later Dr. James Rutherford, M.P.), another Chatham boy, called on him. Rutherford was in his third year in Medicine. He explained to the ladies that the glands in old folk were all shrivelled up, that they could not contract the mumps and were perfectly safe. Edmund was allowed to stay, but the humour of this incident always remained with him.

Subsequently Oliver removed to Draper's quarters and they "batched" together. This untoward illness was fatal to his full success, and he ranked only second in first-class honours in each course.

The University of Toronto

During the remainder of his Arts work he was enrolled in honour classics only. At the end of his second year, there being no mumps, he achieved first place in first-class honours and the William Mulock Scholarship; in his third year, first again, he obtained the Moss Scholarship; and in his final year, first once more, the coveted McCaul Gold Medal. This extraordinary youth brought only thirty dollars with him when he first left his home, nor did he require any more from the meagre resources of the fifty-acre farm, though it would gladly have been provided at whatever self-sacrifice. He simply "put himself through." The ordinary Arts course being completed, he took his M.A., presenting a thesis on "The Pastoral Stage of Rome." He was now instructor in Greek and held the Alexander Mackenzie Fellowship in Political Science. But his boundless energy was not confined to mere academic studies. Under Rev. Dr. John Neil, a most helpful pastor, he helped to organize a Young Men's Club at Westminster Church for the study of serious questions such as "Chamberlain's Proposals," "The Significance of Radium," "The Value of Geology." In 1904 he won a Fellowship at Columbia University, New York, but though the Fellowship was generous, it was no easy task to finance his way in the expensive city. One time he served as a night watchman at a millionaire's residence. At other times he gave lessons in horseback riding, and finally with his resourcefulness and his aptitude in overcoming

The Life of Principal Oliver

difficulties he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His thesis was "Roman Economic Conditions Under the Republic," a work of unusual, painstaking and exact research. Shortly afterwards he accepted a lectureship in the department of history at McMaster University, but that opens a new chapter in his biography, the way in which he was led to his great life's service.

The bright spots in these crowded years of college studies were his periodical visits to his home. Never did a week pass but it brought the unforgotten letter to his mother. Yet no letters could compensate for his personal presence, so bright, so original and so full of fun. These were gala days in the home. At the familiar siding the old horse waited impatiently the arrival of the train. The younger members of the family were expectant. The whole community indeed watched for the visit of this distinguished lad who had carried off the highest awards of Toronto University. Then there came the dismal hour when he departed. In the winter-time it was dark, the flickering of the lantern's light, the crunching of the half-frozen sods under the wheels were all very dreary. For the time being the lamp seemed to be extinguished in the home.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEST

*Onward, ye men of prayer,
Scatter in rich exuberance the seed,
Whose fruit is living bread, and all your need
Will God supply; His harvest ye shall share.*

—W. B. TAPPAN

AN early spring day in 1904 found Edmund Oliver, his classes closed behind him, and his books packed in the baggage car in front of him, on the Grand Trunk Railway, travelling to North Bay, where he would change to the Canadian Pacific train from Montreal and head for the West, and all that the West held ultimately for him of opportunity, challenge and triumph. One would like to know what were the thoughts that surged through that ever restless brain, as he tramped the wooden platform at the Junction, waiting for the headlights of the Transcontinental. When he surveyed the crowd that always at the evening hour gathered around the station, coatless, collarless, but full of the bounding, breezy life, healthy, wholesome, so characteristic of pioneer times, and made this first contact with the spirit of the West at this gateway to New Ontario, did he get some glimpse of the stupendous task that awaited him far beyond those many leagues of rock and scrubby wilderness? Was the first germ born within his mind of that ideal

The Life of Principal Oliver

and vision that in after years found stirring expression in his great book, *The Winning of the Frontier?*

All through the night he could hear the noise of the train as it rushed through rocky cuttings, and he could feel the swaying of the car as the track wound round some lonely lake. Occasionally there was a stop at a remote divisional point, the tramp of human feet on the platform, the only sign of habitation in the weary waste which on one side continued unbroken to the remote shores of Hudson Bay. Morning dawned on an endless succession of small rocky hills, scrubby groves of larch and grey pine, or birch and poplar, lakes bordered with alders, and slow swampy streams, a new lake every ten minutes. The approach to Western Canada was evidently not through a stately avenue. By mid-day the growing lethargy of the passengers under this monotonous scenery was happily disturbed by the rapid descent to Heron Bay and the suddenly disclosed but magnificent panorama of Lake Superior, its sparkling waves flashing in the bright spring sunshine, itself a silver sea, broken by the dark jagged rocks of innumerable islands. Thirty years and more have made no change on this picturesque portion of the Western journey, nor on the interest and admiration that it arouses, culminating in the romantic twists and turns around the winding shores of Jackfish Bay. But a generation of technical engineering skill has transformed the line. In those days the rails lay over creaking

wooden trestles, and the cautious trains crept at a snail's pace across yawning chasms, that gave the traveller a weird thrill. The story goes that at the more treacherous of those trestles, the conductor and engineer would go forward for a consultation, and the alarmed spectators would hear some such laconic conversation as this: "What do you think, Bill?" And Bill would reply, "I guess she'll stand another," and climb relentlessly into his cab.

The second morning brought a complete change of scenery. The "Canadian shield," the foundation of the North American Continent, with its hard, twisted, glistening gneiss rocks, has been crossed. The hills subside into gentle undulations and then melt away into a perfectly even plain. The pines and larches disappear, and between the poplar groves are caught first glimpses of the lovely green expanse of the great western prairie. Winnipeg, as Oliver first saw it, was a hive of busy industry. Rows and rows of new-made streets were rising out of the black soil as by the magic of some Aladdin's lamp. There the alchemy of youth was converting the muddy loam into bricks of gold, business men with alert countenances were toiling over fresh plans of expansion, while at the station, waiting for the outgoing train, rested the immigrant in his red sweater, surrounded by his meagre effects, the restless scions of his home clustered about him, his patient wife seated on the trunk and crooning over her infant child, but all faces turned toward the West and the

The Life of Principal Oliver

star of hope shining in every eye. It is difficult after these recent years of sombre reality to recapture the glowing spirit, the optimism, the courage and the extraordinary buoyancy of the opening years of the twentieth century in Western Canada. "It is the ozone in the air," people said, in default of any more philosophical explanation.

Under radiantly blue skies, spangled here and there with white fleecy clouds, the shining chariots of the ancient Greek gods, who it would seem had also caught the slogan, "Go West, young man," and over miles of verdant prairie dotted with the white blossoms of spring anemones, the Transcontinental carried young Oliver ever further on his journey. Night darkened, but through the open window in the balmy air he could see scattered far and wide the twinkling lights that marked the humble pioneer's home, where busy hands were hastening to put in the summer's crop. Next morning found the train steaming in higher altitudes and over drier soil. The character of the prairie was changing. Its flatness was gone. To the south the horizon was broken by low undulating hills, over which coursed herds of fleet-footed antelopes. These hills were moraines, the lingering traces of vast glaciers that had descended from the frozen North and blocked the channels of the rivers as they had done in Ontario; relaxing their grip and releasing the waters of great lakes, they had bared to the fertilizing beams of the sun the most fertile of soils, covering

tens of thousands of square miles, to form the "granary of the British Empire." But when Oliver arrived these rolling prairies were still the celebrated ranching country, the paradise of the "cowboy" and the home of thrilling romance. Ralph Connor had proclaimed them to every known corner of the English-speaking world.

The train stopped at what was then the humble platform of Walsh, and Oliver alighted with his trunk. A "democrat" was awaiting, into which he and another student, unknown to him, immediately climbed. They were hardly seated when his new-found companion announced, "I am from Queen's. Where are you from?" and Oliver had modestly to confess that he was only from Toronto—how far that modesty might be feigned, it would be invidious to enquire.

Oliver threw himself with his usual zest and delight into the spirit of this new land. He admired those feats of skill and agility that have made the cowboy the admiration and envy of the young Canadian. Nothing would do him but to get a "bucking broncho" and have a try. Mr. Thomas A. Hargrave, still living at Walsh, Alberta, with whom he was fortunate enough to make his home, recalls that amusing incident. All was ready, the group of spectators gathered, the camera provided for the event, the broncho brought in, and the young minister essayed to mount. Possibly the presence of a camera was a sufficient hint to an

The Life of Principal Oliver

intelligent broncho that he was expected to "do his bit." In any event, he did it with his usual dexterity and abruptness, and "the cloth" turned a somersault over the slanting ears of the triumphant steed. But nothing daunted, the uninjured preacher shook off the dust and was ready to mount again. Whether it was the restrained language, rather unusual in a broncho's experience under such circumstances, or whether it was an animal's sense of the presence of a master mind, to the surprise of all, the beast allowed him to do so and trotted off quite complacently. A student missionary of such a temper could hardly fail to be a welcome acquisition to any community and to be a wholesome influence in the place.

The adventures of a minister's life, if that be not too ambitious a term for his experiences, begin on his first field, and in the olden days it was usually with a horse. Oliver's four-footed companion was named "Siam," and he faithfully fulfilled the requirements of an advertisement that once appeared in a Scotch paper, "Wanted a horse to do the work of a parish minister." He was known and welcomed everywhere. But one day he had a very narrow escape from the most terrible fate that can overtake a Western quadruped. As they were pursuing their parish rounds, both horse and rider came upon one of those familiar spots colloquially known as a "slough." They were into it before they realized the danger, and the horse began to sink. Oliver

dismounted in all haste and ran toward the nearest ranch, but it was a good three miles away. Breathless he arrived, and then galloped back with the assistance he needed. Imagine their relief, with just a shade of humiliation on the face of the distinguished Toronto graduate, to encounter the object of their feverish solicitude, sauntering slowly towards them, or stopping occasionally to nibble at a tuft of grass. "Horse sense" had proved more efficacious than the learning of the schools, and the animal had extricated itself in its own nature-taught way. But Siam's many and varied services were not entirely restricted to the problems of transportation. He had at times to give aid to the pastor in his spiritual duties—at least to serve on occasion as a pulpit. Once when riding on his rounds Oliver came upon a "sheep herder" (to be carefully distinguished from a "shepherd"). The spot was quite remote. Opportunities for religious worship must have been very infrequent, if indeed not totally impossible, in an occupation that demanded such unceasing vigilance. Further, the solitary man's countenance was inscrutably veiled behind a three months' growth of untrimmed bushy whiskers, and the preacher could not discover what his first reaction was to the unique suggestion, that he should listen to a sermon. Siam was converted into a pulpit and the service began, and all went well until the prayer, when the astute creature, aware that he was not being watched, became restless and, like an

The Life of Principal Oliver

insubordinate Official Board, took the conduct of affairs into his own hands, so that the devotions had to be interlarded with, "Whoa, Siam! be quiet, will you!" and other unliturgical responses that have not been introduced into the *Book of Common Order*.

The above incidents from Oliver's first mission field have been furnished by Mr. Hargrave, who adds the following testimony:

The Doctor during his stay here entered with great gusto into the spirit of the ranching country, was accepted wherever he went with a welcoming hand, and when not busy at his calling, made himself useful in innumerable ways. So much so that, when he left, his genial smile and voice were greatly missed by everybody.

A deeper and more difficult problem now awaits the interpreter of a life like Dr. Oliver's. How came it that a student of such promise and brilliancy found himself out on a Western ranch, preaching the Gospel at that halcyon period in Canadian development when so many lucrative openings in other directions beckoned to "the lad of pairs"? What had turned his footsteps into the pathway of religion? How had his chief interest become focused there? These are questions not easy to answer; for Dr. Oliver was of a somewhat reticent temperament, when it came to the inner secrets of the soul; and he has left us no direct and carefully analyzed account of the inevitable conflict that a student in the end of the nineties and in the opening years of the

present century was bound to encounter. But we know that he had his doubts, his intellectual struggle, and we know the glorious certainty at which his faith ultimately arrived, and with what reverent, loving and self-sacrificing devotion he dedicated his whole life to the service of that Saviour in whom he believed. However, though we have not the story directly from his pen or from his lips, we have a fair idea of the general nature of the conflict in the conditions that obtained in the universities of that time, and we find in his letters traces of the perplexing disturbance it occasioned in his mind. To describe it as the opposition of the aggressive spirit of science to the quiet confidence of the Christian believer is perhaps to put it in too trite and hackneyed a way, and one that is almost meaningless to the present generation; for the echoes of that stormy battle are growing fainter and fainter. Since the nineties, have not science and religion lived side by side, and learned not to be dismayed by each other's frowning countenance? On this Western continent the Church has survived, nay, increased, despite the contemptuous predictions in certain quarters a generation ago. Nor has the scientist hauled down his colours. He is as much an evolutionist as ever. Mankind has discovered that all human knowledge is very limited, and that there can be more than one approach to the acquisition of Truth. To the philosopher the rainbow is a conglomeration of vapour molecules,

The Life of Principal Oliver

each refracting the sunbeam and breaking it up into ether waves of varying dimensions. To the poet it is a dream of ethereal loveliness, a visible symbol of eternal beauty, and he apostrophizes it thus:

I ask not proud philosophy
To teach me what thou art.

Perhaps it was the theologian, Ritschl, now but little read, that helped us to understand how the same object can have a religious value and at the same time a scientific interpretation, but in the nineties Ritschl was a ferment still at work, and his object had not been fully accomplished.

There is a further reason why the conflict between science and religion is not so acute to-day. The scientific interest for the popular mind has moved into another and much more fascinating field. It is concerned now with chemistry and physics. The electrical theory of matter has yielded such extraordinary results, the ordinary man is fairly dazed as he watches the aeroplane coursing through the sky with an audacity that would have dismayed even an Icarus; as he listens in to the softly flowing melodies of a glorious symphony from New York, even though the blizzard rages around his aerial in some remote point in our Dominion; or as he watches the electric current perform the offices of twenty domestic servants in the average citizen's home. Condensers, oscillators, inductances in series, induct-

ances in parallel, thermionic valves, etc., are the fruitful but innocent objects of youthful pre-occupation to-day, and they present no obstacles to religion; nay, rather do they emphasize the reign of law in the universe, and where there is law it is assumed there is a Law Giver.

The closing years of the nineteenth century were very different. The biological interest then held full sway. The *Origin of Species* and the *Descent of Man* were speculations that disturbed the Church *immo pectore*. Across the desk on the bookshelf, as I write, lies my father's copy of Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. One cannot gaze upon it without a sense of awe, as one recalls the intellectual revolution it so unconsciously precipitated. Not that there is anything specially arresting about the volume itself. The closely printed lines, the meagre woodcuts, the remote and superseded discussions that crowd its pages, are all uninviting enough to the general reader. Nor does it announce any startling theory of evolution. So far from that, it rather wastes much breath in criticizing "the progressive development of organic life at successive geological periods" (ch. ix). Its unique influence consists in the introduction of a new method. Hitherto Biological Science—Botany and Zoology—found their chief concern in the collection and classification of facts, and looked askance at any follower that sought to shirk this spade work and to content himself with being an arm-chair doctrinaire. Lyell

The Life of Principal Oliver

stressed interpretation, and set in motion a new and unforeseen train of speculation. After the first edition appeared, Keble, "the sweet singer" of Oxford, it is interesting to learn, drove all the way to Winchester in a coach, arguing without intermission in favour of "the six days of creation."

But what was of more consequence, the book fell into the hands of a young scholar bearing the name of Charles Darwin, and awoke within him this new conception of the task of science. Under the spell of Lyell, which he frankly admits, he, too, became an interpreter of nature, and with consequences that reached far beyond his utmost dream. His chief problem was how to account for the variety of species of plants and animals that he found around him. Some of them were evidently close of kin, while others were very remote. Yet between them all were certain features in common. They were like leaves on a tree, each on its own twig, yet all connected by branch and trunk and root. Not content with tracing and proclaiming the association, he laboured to discover the cause.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.

The result was a brilliant scientific generalization. Various breeds of sheep had been improved by artificial selection, various and very diverse kinds of dogs had been bred by a similar method. If instead of human hands, Nature's invisible fingers

should have been at work; and if, instead of a few limited generations, hundreds of millions of years were allotted for this slow but unremitting process, should we not find in this "Natural Selection" an adequate explanation of the diversity of species that abounds on the surface of the earth? So it was that, in 1859, *Origin of Species* appeared, and produced a great hubbub in theological circles, and chiefly on two counts. First it ran counter to the accepted doctrine of "Special Creation," based on a prosaic interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis, and in the popular mind on the poetic rendering in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. To abandon a "special creation" for each kind of plant and animal was to many minds equivalent to abandoning God. To-day that phase of the dispute is all but forgotten. Whether the term used is "breeding," "development" or "evolution," pedigree is everywhere accepted. Indeed, in special breeds registration of it is insisted upon. Any one bringing forward some organism that he claimed had been "specially created" would find considerable difficulty in getting the ear even of the religious public. So the church bells ring out their triumphant peal every Sunday morning. God has not been dethroned from His place as the Creator of the world.

It was on the second count, however, that the controversy became most acute. The reckless scientist, too inconsiderate of human sensibilities and *amour propre*, had not been careful enough to

The Life of Principal Oliver

delimit the region in which his "Natural Selection" with its "Struggle for Existence" and "Survival of the Fittest" had carried on its operations. *Homo Sapiens* was just one of many species involved. Man had no special prerogative; he was no exception. True, he occupied an exalted place on the top of the tree, but he had not been put there; he had climbed of his own accord. He had "evolved." The public reaction to this humiliating view of our dignified human life was a burning indignation. The whole artillery of the Church was directed upon the offending monster who could perpetrate such shocking ideas, so ruinous to faith and so hurtful to refined manners. The pulpits thundered forth ridicule, denunciation, threats for time and eternity; and whole salvos of texts were fired upon the unhappy Darwin. One scornful minister preached on "Can a monkey drive a train?" and forthwith disposed of the whole miserable business. But as Burns has it, "Facts are things that winna' ding." Bit by bit it was painfully discovered that it was easier to denounce than it was to disprove. Students, those restless mortals that will not be downed by frowns and shrugs, peeped at first furtively into the forbidden page, then at length walked fearlessly into the biological laboratory with its heretical smells and mystifying diagrams. They compared the "paddle" of a whale with the hand of a man. The teeth of a gorilla, of an orang, and of a man were placed side by side. The point of the human

ear was inspected; the scalp muscle twitched. Photographs of babies with the soles of their feet turned in, and of others, newly born, suspending their whole weight by holding on to a stick, were studied with disquieting suggestiveness. The acute, though acrid, pens of Huxley, Tyndall and Spencer took up the quarrel against conventional religion, and in the battle between the theologian's concordance and the geologist's hammer, victory was not always on the side of the believer. The skies began to look ominous. In the eighties and nineties Naturalism with its concomitant Materialism was clearly in the ascendant and making rapid inroads into the universities, especially in the north-eastern states of America, where the results are still to be seen in Behaviourism and Humanism. All the strength and wisdom of the Church, however, were not expended in a foolish conflict with Science. Within its walls arose some far-sighted and dispassionate leaders who realized that an unfortunate mistake had been made, that Evolution instead of being hostile to Faith was in reality a confirmation of it, that it only showed "how through all the ages an increasing purpose runs," and how both in its origin and direction we must believe in the controlling hand of an all-wise Providence. Notable among these was Professor Henry Drummond, whose influence over the student mind in those critical years it is hard to overrate. He snatched the Darwinian's

The Life of Principal Oliver

weapon from his hand and wrote, not "The Descent," but "The Ascent of Man."

When Oliver matriculated at the university he entered into the aftermath of all this controversy. It is true that the evolutionist was no longer an outlaw in the Church or even in the pulpit; but the mental adjustment of the religious mind to a "reign of law" was far from being complete. The multiplication table was accepted as inviolate. No miracle could disturb its inflexible figures; but the laws of chemistry and physics were not supposed to possess the same rigidity. The *Deus ex machina* could suspend them to suit the Divine purpose. For instance, in these same nineties there appeared one of the most notable of our church histories, Sutherland's *Methodism in Canada*, readable from cover to cover, vivid, ardent, tender, sympathetic, yet discriminating, telling the entrancing story of one of the most powerful religious movements that this country has ever known, yet its pages preserve many startling incidents, where both the wrath and mercy of God broke through from the unseen world in definite physical acts. A missionary takes ship in one direction, but is caught in contrary winds and borne to quite another destination, where he begins a very notable work for God. The contrary wind is clearly God's hand, a manifest interference with meteorological conditions to accomplish a Divine purpose. So it was expressed and so it was accepted. The present generation listening in on

the radio to the weather forecast for the morrow does not for a moment anticipate any supernatural disturbance to upset its calculations. Such a possibility would render science uncertain and make the pathway of progress precarious indeed. But the present generation preserves its faith in God just as firmly as ever, though it believes that He violates none of His Laws. That He accomplished His beneficent purpose is the main concern. Whether the wind that blew the missionary to his destination be regarded as miraculous, or as occurring in the ordinary course of meteorological events, is of quite minor significance, as long as God brought the missionary to the desired haven. All this is simple and clear to us to-day and gives no shock to our faith. Not that there is no miracle. Every day we see the human spirit guiding and controlling the affairs of this globe, "science remaking the world," and this is a perpetual miracle, yet always in submission to and never in violation of mathematical, chemical and physical laws. Even so, without disturbing the calculations of the scientist, the all-wise and all-gracious Father of mankind is creating for His children a new heaven and a new earth. But while almost trite and commonplace to us to-day, such views as these were very upsetting to good Christian people at the time when Oliver entered college.

Another factor that made the struggle all the more alarming was the entrance of Higher Criticism on

The Life of Principal Oliver

the hitherto sacred territory of the New Testament. Oliver was quite familiar with it in secular history—particularly in his classical studies, when he learned that “Homer was not written by Homer, but by another man of the same name.” Doubtless he also accepted it in the Old Testament where a progressive revelation through prophet, law-giver and sacred documents had become the recognized Divine method. But the New Testament was holy ground, and when the profane hand of irreverent criticism threatened to touch it, a shiver went through the spine of the Church. Sir Robert Falconer has told us frankly the agony of his own mind, when the *Biblia Encyclopaedia* was published and the radical articles of Schmiedel made their appearance, how the waters of uncertainty seemed to rise until they almost reached his lips. Then deliverance came, not through the letter that killeth but through the Spirit that giveth life, through direct contact with the Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should like to have known by what road so intense and sincere a soul as Oliver found its way out of this dismal slough of despond. But while we have no written statement to hand, we have in his subsequent faith what may well serve as the key to it. He has a very profound realization of the actual presence and saving power of his Lord. God had come to him through Christ, and henceforth all his plans and thoughts were steeped in prayer, as

all can testify who knew him intimately. He knew "in whom he believed." He lived in the strength of Paul's great verse (Phil. 4: 6, 7):

Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

And further, the way out of this period of perplexity and into the active service of the ministry came also from his strong practical nature. He sought knowledge with avidity, but always to do something with it. He would not count the petals of a rose just to know how many there were, but to put them to some use. Mere speculations that were simply deterrents to some noble purpose, his mind instinctively discarded. It is not difficult to see, therefore, how when his mind encountered any destructive theories in the same Gospels that disclosed Christ and the glories of His Kingdom, these theories became of secondary significance, and Christ became all in all. And so we find him on his mission field at Walsh in Alberta in 1904.

CHAPTER V
SASKATCHEWAN

*Each Spring she watched the wild birds' northward flight,
Each Autumn heard with grief their southward call;
And moons of frost and flowers waxed and waned,
Before she loved this alien land at all.*

*And then it was her children's land; they played
Contentedly beyond the homestead door;
They had not missed the skylark's song at dawn,
Nor missed the sound of surf upon the shore.*

*This land was theirs, and they were of the land;
Its strength was in their blood and flesh and bone,
Its softness in their eyes. And so she locked
Her dreams away, and made the land her own.¹*

—CONSTANCE DAVIES WOODROW

THE love of adventure is in the human blood. From the days when the first daring troglodyte pushed his uncertain log out into the turbid stream, the lure of discovery has swayed the ambition of man. It may have been just to see what lay beyond the next headland, or to find some El Dorado, that had touched his avarice, or the realm of a Prester John, which had the promise both of this life and that which is to come, not to speak of "the face that launched a thousand ships and burned the topmost towers of Ilium." But among all these adventures none fascinates the imagination more, and surely none has brought more profitable results to the civilized world than the search for a passage to the

¹*Poetry Year Book, 1935. Montreal Branch, C.A.A.*

spices of the Orient through the stubborn barricade of the American continents that stretch from the chill ice-floes of the North to the treacherous storms that impede navigation around "The Horn." It cast a spell over the English seaman, and it is amusing to note, as early as 1576, Martin Frobisher describing this achievement as "the only thing in the world yet left undone, by which a notable mind might be made famous and fortunate."

In 1610 Henry Hudson made a last attempt in that pathetic voyage of his. He had tried the Chesapeake, and became stranded in the Alleghenies, then the Hudson, only to be blocked by the swamps of Saratoga. But his indomitable spirit did not relinquish the search, and after another futile effort he found himself at last with joyful heart on the open seas whose name for ever will perpetuate his undaunted spirit. But disappointment even there dogged his steps. Hudson Bay was itself only a *cul-de-sac* on a magnificent scale, and Collier has enshrined in canvas the last days of this great explorer, turned adrift by a mutinous crew, in an open boat with his little son and a few loyal supporters. His sacrifice, however, was not in vain. In 1670 was formed "The Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay." These were the first white explorers to spread themselves over the vast Canadian plains of the West. How they toiled up the surging rapids of the Saskatchewan, how they canoed over the shining surface of

The Life of Principal Oliver

hitherto unknown lakes, scaring the wild fowl for the first time with the discharge of their primitive fire-arms, and how they drove the bear and wolf from their lairs in the tall timber land, forms a romantic tale that it is hoped the public will soon have from the competent pen of Professor A. S. Morton of Saskatchewan University.

Every Canadian schoolboy, too, has followed with breathless excitement the wanderings of La Salle and his confreres in their search for the Western Ocean across the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi, and then of the Vérendryes, father and son, to within sight of the Rockies that barred their further advance. For courage, thrill, exuberant joy or crushing disappointment, few lands can offer a more exciting or a more spirited story than the prairies of Western Canada. For two centuries and more, fur-traders, *coureurs-de-bois*, adventurers and explorers wandered over this vast domain, mingling with war-like tribes of Indians, following in the rear of the buffalo herd, which provided them with food, clothing and shelter, watching the spring come with its garlands of flowers, or the winter blizzard bury every vestige of life under its glistening blanket of snow, awakening early to see the summer sun receive the homage of the prairie from every opening blossom, or relaxing the toils of the day in the splendours of the evening sky. "The East may have its apple blossoms," exclaimed Dr. Oliver once upon the platform, "but the West has its sunsets."

But the latter part of the nineteenth century brought a complete change in the fate and fortunes of the Western Plains. "Three constructive conceptions" on the part of the Dominion Government, as they have been termed, were responsible for the change. The first of these was in 1870 when the control of these vast areas was transferred from the Hudson's Bay Company to the people of Canada, and so the final page was being turned in a chapter that began with the drifting open boat in those icy northern waters, a chapter which with its enterprise, its resourcefulness, its personnel of trader and Indian, its vast distances and its boundless opportunities, it is fair to say, has in some form or another fascinated the imagination of every English school-boy. The second "conception" was the project of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the fruit of Confederation, and designed to link together the scattered territories of the Dominion and bring the products of the farm and the factory nearer to their market. Though the construction of railway lines through hundreds of miles of untenanted land was a venture that occasioned many a sarcastic criticism, the prediction being made that enough tickets would not be sold to pay for the "axle grease," and although it plunged the country in serious financial obligations, there was such an air of magnificence about it, an expression of confidence in the future, a demonstration to the world of Canada's capacity to think and act, that it has become one of the achieve-

The Life of Principal Oliver

ments of which her people are justly proud. Its immediate effect was to make possible the settlement of the vast Western areas. The third "conception," that followed the advent of the Liberal administration into power, was the vigorous immigration policy, inaugurated in 1897 and maintained enthusiastically for several subsequent years, covering the prairie with smiling homesteads and laying the foundation of flourishing towns and cities. These three factors, following in succession, and then operating together, changed the face of the West, and indeed altered the whole outlook of the Dominion.

The early days of this century were halcyon times for the immigrant. He was invited, welcomed, assisted, encouraged in every way, and he came from every part of the white man's world. There were Britishers, of course, men from the cities, some of whom are reported to have sown bran and waited "three weeks for the blessed stuff to come up"; farmers from Nebraska who, having put in their southern crop, packed their ploughs and in a few days were sowing wheat on the banks of the Saskatchewan, in those happy days when it was hard to tell where the international border lay, if indeed there was one. Ukrainians from Russia, Jews from Poland, Germans, Dutch, Scandinavians and a multitude of others all came pouring in, and brought with them a babel of tongues and a strange mixture of manners. Among these not the least startling

were the "peculiar people," the Doukhobors, who brought their whole outfit of traditions and aversions into these hospitable parts.

With this mass immigration, pouring through the narrow Winnipeg neck and then spreading itself fan-like over the virgin prairie, there came of necessity new problems, or perhaps to speak more accurately, old problems in a new guise. The vexed question of responsible government was revived again in its final form in a nation whose "last West" was rapidly being populated. Until the beginning of the present century the prairies, over which Indian, trapper and buffalo roamed, were styled the North-West Territories and were administered by a Lieutenant-Governor who ruled under the direct authority of Ottawa and took his directions from the Federal Government. Local Assemblies might advise, but possessed no controlling power. This is not the place to unravel again the intricate story of how self-government was secured, and how the various claims, local and Dominion, were satisfactorily adjusted; but in 1905, with the consent of all parties, though not without some strong differences of opinion, particularly in matters of education, the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were established and on the same status as that enjoyed by the other Provinces of the Dominion. The task that awaited them was not easy. This complex and polyglot population, whose one interest in common was freedom to think and act as one pleased,

The Life of Principal Oliver

presented its own difficulty which drew heavily on the wisdom and patience of any administration. *Tot homines, tot sententiae*, as the Romans put it who had wrestled with the same problem in far-off days. The pioneer press, too, was not quite so restrained in those early days as in later and more refined times. People had come expecting to make a fortune in a few days without work; they were disappointed, and began to grumble, pouring out maledictions on the country, for which the *Saskatoon Sentinel* brought them to task in the following characteristic paragraph:

Sufferer—Evidently you possess the blues. What did you expect Saskatoon to be—a second edition of Montreal or Chicago? You are too darn "previous" for this country, friends. We want men of pluck and spirit out here, able to do lots and give their tongues a rest. If you can't find more suitable employment, gather mushrooms and say your prayers, that is, if you do pray. Try the digging of a cellar, fourteen by ten. From experience we can recommend it as an excellent cure for your contemptible ailment.

This may not be in the style of

One whom the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony,

but it possesses an unmistakable directness and a wholesome ruggedness not unsuitable to the occasion, and perhaps in a measure to all times.

The next problem revived in the "new West"

was naturally that of education, which passed through the various pioneer phases to be found everywhere. Only, thanks to the discoveries of Applied Science, to more rapid and ready means of transportation, and to immediate contacts with the whole civilized world, the periods of transition were much less protracted than in the older Provinces. The vanguard of the incoming horde had to make the best shift they could for schools and school-teachers. In the "bluff" country, where there were groves of poplar and birch, sufficiency of wood could be found and log structures, stuffed with clay and moss, were easily and cheaply erected. But on the treeless prairie to the south, where the eye roves over the boundless expanse to "where the sky comes down," there was not a vestige of timber. So recourse must be had to the beds of the rivers, so few and far between, and from the boulder drift laid bare by the current of the stream, suitable stones were selected, carted considerable distances, embedded in mud instead of mortar and fashioned into a primitive temple of learning, where the Western idea was taught to shoot. Where even river-beds were not available, there was nothing left but the prairie turf, which was cut into appropriate lengths, piled on top of one another, and formed into a rude "sod shack." Here "the three R's" were duly imparted, and once more the story told of "The wooden horse of Troy and Creusa's sad similitude."

The Life of Principal Oliver

The West did not labour long under these severe conditions. A very few years saw a marvellous transformation. Instead of sod shacks and rude structures, the finest rural school buildings in Canada arose on the townships. The writer recalls with pleasure visiting a decade ago a small town of less than five hundred inhabitants, that had a "community school" to which the pupils were conveyed in cars from the surrounding farms. It was furnished with chemical and physical laboratories, possessed an ample auditorium, where public lectures were delivered, and had attached to it a qualified nurse who held a weekly clinic for children, especially babies, where mothers received instruction after the most approved manner.

But the pathway of Education, though marked by such striking improvements, was not "roses, roses all the way." There were thorns among the roses. Once more the sectarian interest intruded its troublesome presence, and though thinly veiled under the designation of "minority" and "majority" school, deceived nobody as to its true import, the foisting on public funds of denominational schools, as a matter of fact, Roman Catholic. Such schools indeed had been permitted under the administration of the North-West Territories, and might of course have been re-enacted under the new provincial government. It was placing them in the constitution of Saskatchewan and Alberta that stirred the Protestant spirit of the Dominion, though it has been

claimed that the excitement was far less noted in the Provinces themselves than in Ontario and other parts.

But an elementary system of education, however progressive and skilfully adapted, could not in itself meet all the needs of the Province thus newly formed. The keen intelligence of its youth (and it was by no means the sluggards that had taken the westward trail) demanded facilities for higher and professional education. The universities of the East were far away. Travelling was expensive. Spare cash was absorbed in the further equipment of the farm. It would seem as if the more influential callings in the Dominion must be closed against the lad from the prairies. It is true that McGill and McMaster Universities did attempt temporary branches in Vancouver and Brandon, and their contribution to learning will always be gratefully remembered. Brandon still continues. But these tentative efforts only served to bring into bolder relief the necessity for a Provincial University, and this the Government of Saskatchewan decided upon and made permanent provision for in its financial estimates. This first government achieved many notable things, has "many stars in its crown," but none shines more brightly than their fortunate selection of the first President of the university, Dr. Walter C. Murray. As a student his academic record had been brilliant both in Canada and in Edinburgh. His range of studies had been unusually

The Life of Principal Oliver

extensive for that period, but what was of more consequence, he added to these gifts of learning an exceedingly wise disposition. He is generally reputed as one of the wisest men Canada has produced. This wisdom resulted from two most valuable qualities of heart and head. He had a singular sympathy that enabled him to put himself in the other man's place, and he had an impartial intellect that could approach a problem from another's point of view. These qualities stood him in good stead in the crucial task of founding a university amid many conflicting interests. It was a promising day for the West when he was called from the chair of Philosophy at Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., and persuaded to accept these new and heavy responsibilities.

From the first he was resolved that, while the government maintained the institution, it should in no way interfere with its administration, above all there should be no political patronage, so destructive of harmony and efficiency, and in this he was cordially seconded by the government itself, which was sincerely anxious that the undertaking should prove a success and be an unhampered boon to the people. His next task was to adjust the curriculum to the economic conditions on the prairie. It is here, perhaps, that his freedom from academic conventions and his excellent judgment came into full play. The older Canadian universities had arisen under the pressure of other times and forgotten incentives. The oldest, King's University,

founded at Windsor, Nova Scotia, in 1787, and referred to in a previous page, was intended as a prophylactic against the Republicanism with which it was feared the newly constituted United States might infect British Dominions, and required the acceptance of the "thirty-nine articles" in the Anglican prayer-book as the prerequisite of admission, in the fatuous hope that by this simple device disloyalty would be suppressed. The second university created was at Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick, and it was in response to a plea, expressed particularly by a mother on behalf of a growing family, that the loyalists who had been driven from the United States for adherence to the British Crown should not be compelled to sacrifice the education of their children in addition to the loss of their estates. Between these pioneer days and the Federation of the University of Toronto in 1887, which has already been fully discussed, there intervened a century in which Church and State struggled for the control of Higher Education. Now the Hon. Sir Frederick W. G. Haultain, the first to advocate a university for the North-West Territories, was himself a graduate of the University of Toronto, familiar with its stormy history, and a stout advocate of State control. He did not, however, encounter any insuperable difficulty. Modifications were made in his suggestions, a measure of independence was granted to the institution. But the controversy was no longer a live

The Life of Principal Oliver

issue. Another of more vital consequence to the farmer had arisen; how was the new institution to be fitted to the requirements of life on the soil? Its first and greatest responsibility was to put Higher Education within reach of the children of the settlers. Further, it must apply Science to Industry. England and the United States were busily engaged along this line. Birmingham had a professor of brewing as well as of metallurgy. Wisconsin could point triumphantly to its test for butter fat as well as to shelves filled with famous American Histories. It was this modern conception of the function of a Western university that Dr. Murray whole-heartedly adopted. Not that he neglected the older and more traditional curricula, schools were being established at the rate of one, or at times even two, a day, and qualified teachers must be provided. Many had come from the East for the summer and had returned in the autumn, but a greater permanency must be secured if true progress was to be made. Clergymen, too, had to be specially trained. In this matter Emmanuel College, the Church of England Theological Institution, set an encouraging example. Candidates for the sacred office were brought out from England, and given practical instruction for their unaccustomed duties in this building which was on the campus of the university and where immediate contacts were made with the problems that confronted them. Sometimes as many as forty or fifty such young men

would be congregated there, who in a few years would be scattered over the wide West and even as far north as the Eskimo. Lawyers, doctors, scientists, also had to be supplied to the growing Province. Nevertheless the unique feature of the university lay in the quite unusual equipment that it possessed for courses in Agriculture. Some of these were short and some more protracted. Everything was devised to aid the farmer. Research laboratories were also constructed that have proved an invaluable asset in combating frost, rust and other inveterate enemies of the tiller of the soil. Such, in very meagre outline, was the multiplex task to which the first President addressed himself with such wise and patient skill that he leaves his name engraved for all time on the annals of Saskatchewan.

Among the many and outstanding gifts possessed by President Murray was his singular sagacity in the selection of his staff, a gift that he shared in a marked degree with his life-long friend, Sir Robert Falconer, then the President of the University of Toronto. Part of this sagacity was due to the infinite pains he took to discover the quality of his man, and part also to his unwillingness to overstress the mere academic attainments of an applicant. He knew the needs of the West and that virility of mind, courage, generosity, freedom from hampering prejudices and frank confidence in the future were indispensable requisites for the new institution. It

The Life of Principal Oliver

will always remain a pleasant recollection for the writer that when Dr. Murray was in the throes of these difficult decisions, he was able to place in his hands a copy of Oliver's published thesis on "Roman Economic Conditions Under the Republic," previously referred to. The President was immediately impressed with the exact scholarship of the work and the careful manner in which it was documented. He made further inquiries, for Dr. Oliver was unusually young for so important a post, and with most satisfactory results. At that time the youthful professor was teaching history at McMaster University, in Toronto, and so boyish and merry was his manner, that amusing stories have come down from the campus, where uninformed "freshmen" mistook him at times for one of themselves. But from the very first he was exceptionally effective in the classroom. Professor Long, now of the University of Alberta, gives the following interesting impression of his work, which applies not only to his lectures at McMaster, but to his subsequent university career in the West:

I took two courses with him, one in the History of Mediaeval Europe and the other in British History of the Modern Age. He was a stimulating teacher. He was always friendly and approachable to students, and it was unusual if a little group of them did not remain after class to continue informally the discussion of the points that had arisen. He had a faculty of making vivid and living the personality of great figures in history like

Charlemagne, Abelard, Wolsey, and others. He had an eye for the pageantry of things. He also had a gift for summing up the main tendency of an era in some striking phrase, which remained in one's memory as a central point from which one could organize a great deal of historical material. I remember still his summing up after this fashion the history of eighteenth-century England in the motto, "Ships, colonies and commerce." Dr. Oliver was both a tireless worker and a keen critic, and set a personal example to his students of the industry, thoroughness, sound judgment and intellectual honesty, touched by imagination, which are such fundamental elements both in character and in scholarship. . . . He was always the same—merry, enthusiastic, stimulating, and essentially human.

The President's inquiries could have only one result. Despite his youth, Dr. Oliver was offered an important position on the staff of the new university whose site had just been definitely fixed at Saskatoon. But at the same time there came a competing offer and from a strangely different quarter, the Christian College in Smyrna, and he was confronted with one of those difficult decisions that determine the whole course of one's future life. During the four years of his engagement at McMaster University, always ambitious to extend in every way the range of his scholarship and now enjoying a slightly easier financial position, he had made valuable journeys to Europe, not only studying at famous educational centres, such as Germany then possessed, in which tongue he was fluent, but extending

The Life of Principal Oliver

his travels to Egypt, the Holy Land, and parts of Asia Minor. Principal McLachlan, at the head of the Smyrna institution, was himself from Chatham and used all his persuasive powers to induce the brilliant scholar to join forces with him there. Foreign Missions had all through his life a powerful appeal for Dr. Oliver. They gave scope for originality and enterprise, in which his spirit greatly delighted. He wavered for some time, and then the die was cast in favour of Saskatoon, and thither he went in the autumn of 1909.

His sister, Mary, now Mrs. Floyd of Cobourg, accompanied him as a student during his first session, and has contributed the following interesting account of the beginning of the university and of yet another happy visit to Europe, so vivid and so valuable that it may be of advantage to print it here as a whole.

1909-1910

BY MRS. FLOYD

Dr. Oliver went to Saskatoon temporarily in the fall of 1909. He found the University to which he had been appointed Professor of History and Economics on the third floor of the Drinkle Building. One reached its "halls" by an elevator. To him fell the honour of delivering the first lecture in this embryonic institution, which boasted a staff of five professors, with Dr. Murray as its President. Since there was as yet no professor of German, Dr. Oliver taught that subject also, fully appreciating the fact that one might be required to do many things in this new venture.

Saskatchewan

This University was an altogether delightful place because there was great camaraderie between the professors and students, and this good feeling must have been accentuated not only by the limitations of space for library and classrooms, but also by the narrow margin of years between them. One went to the University to learn, but one acquired also a sense of happiness and loyalty that would have been quite impossible in a larger institution. Oliver entered into and fitted into the spirit of the place with happy ability and undoubtedly thoroughly enjoyed his new work.

This work was not light, because by previous arrangement with the President, he was to cover his year's work before Christmas. Already accustomed to doing more than the average student's amount of work, Oliver had planned, as he often did later, to do two years' work in one. In addition to this routine, the professors delivered public lectures, Oliver giving one course in History, and at week-ends they made contact with various places in the Province. These week-end journeys were the occasion of no little mirth and some hardship, because the trains jumped the tracks with such regularity or unexpected irregularity that when one left on such a trip, the exact time of return was a matter of hopeful conjecture.

By a striking coincidence, Dr. Oliver lived in those first months at the home of Mrs. Copeland. Many years before, she and her husband had chosen their homestead on the banks of the Saskatchewan, and this property was even now becoming the campus and home of the new college. Whether it was due to the tales of the early days and its hardships, of which she could tell many, that Dr. Oliver got his first taste for the early records of the Province, one cannot say, but it was not long before his hunt for archives began. Eventually his finds were to be the beginnings of the Archives Department, housed, later

The Life of Principal Oliver

on, fittingly and significantly in the little stone school-house on the campus. Occasionally he preached in Knox Church, which at that time was next door to Mrs. Copeland's home.

That term passed quickly. New and life-long friendships had been formed; there was the happy sense of being a pioneer in new work in a new land, the kind of adventure that appealed to Oliver's imagination. The sunshine of the prairies, the sting of the frost, the whipping and lashing of the winds, the optimism, the sense of opportunity and urge for work that no one had yet attempted, all these played their part in arousing in him the very beginning of that intense love of the West, which developed as each year went on.

Back in Toronto again for a new year, he enrolled as a final year student in Knox. In this work there were the many congenial friends of the years before, and among them all the usual buoyancy and happiness of work thoroughly enjoyed. There must have been many of those pleasurable arguments that thrive in schools of theology. Oliver records one such in a letter. The student X referred to was one of those very serious people, well over the average age for studying, orthodox of the orthodox, the kind that asked for shocks. "I engaged X in a theological discussion in George McDonald's room. He started talking about inspiration. In the course of conversation, George asked me if I was inspired myself. I replied, 'Certainly, I am.' 'What with?' interrupted X. 'The devil!' burst forth the irrepressible George. Exit X."

These months were eventful in Oliver's life in another respect. It was at this time that he first met Margarita Cowling, whom he was later to marry.

The usual success attended his efforts in Theology. The following comment by the professors of Knox upon his sermon at Westminster Church is significant. This

was the test sermon that each student preached in public before graduating. "Incomparably brilliant and powerful and interesting to professor and students, and in all these respects amply confirming the promise of a distinguished career as a professor. We are glad to have him among our graduates." This summary was probably made by Professor John Edgar McFadyen, whose influence and friendship were of inestimable value in Oliver's career. Oliver always had the greatest admiration and respect for Dr. McFadyen's intellect and inspiration as a teacher.

At the final examination Oliver ranked second, though only a few marks from first place, and thereby won two scholarships. On the morning of April 7th he gave a breakfast at Westminster to the graduating class. The men held a consecration meeting at its close, which they themselves said was "never to be forgotten."

That afternoon he, his sister Mary, and Dr. Davidson left for New York, where they were joined by Mrs. Davidson, her little daughter, Carolyn, and Mrs. John Oliver. After some sight-seeing they all sailed the next morning for Germany on the *Graf-Waldersee*, a slow boat on which nearly every one spoke German. The thirteen days to Hamburg passed quickly and happily. As was usually the case in any group, most of the jokes and fun originated with Oliver. When it was discovered that there was an eloping couple on board, speculations were various but futile. For some time Oliver completely hoaxed his sisters, by telling them the woman in the case was the third occupant of their cabin. The party heard each other's German vocabulary and tried to talk to their fellow passengers in order to attain further facility in speaking. Finally, after reaching Berlin and securing a pension, Oliver sent his sister to school for two months in Ebersevalde, he and Dr. Davidson registered for lectures in the University of Berlin, and studying began in earnest

The Life of Principal Oliver

once more. Lectures which often began as early as seven a.m. were taken under Hans Delbruch, Harnach, Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Meyer and others. The afternoons and evenings were for further study, revision of and preparation for lectures in History in the West. Sometimes the routine was broken by trips to Potsdam, walks in the Tiergarten, occasional evenings at the opera and with the Davidsons. He and Dr. Davidson went to see the famous Passion Play at Oberammergau, and visited Prague, Vienna and Budapest. His original intention had been to return by Russia, but cholera had broken out in that country, and he set out via Denmark and Norway for England. In London he again met his sisters, and later Professor Bateman of Saskatchewan at Windermere. These four travelled together through England, up to Edinburgh, through the Trossachs and finally reached Glasgow. On arrival here, the party were told that, due to the abnormal number of sailings and for various other reasons, the only spaces available were one room and two baths. The two men slept in the baths. The hilarity and good humour of the four increased with the voyage back to Canada. The ship's accommodation was poor, the meals not good, the weather rather rough at first, but nothing dampened their spirits. Oliver was gay and full of fun and excitement—he was to meet his newly acquired fiancée in Toronto. Bateman levelled his witticisms at a clergyman, who paraded the decks incessantly, reading his Bible and sipping hot milk, saying he supposed it was "the sincere milk of the word." Arrived in Quebec, the three Canadians at almost their first meal devoured with native relish the new corn on the cob. The Irishman looked on in compassionate disgust. The two young professors went West.

The conclusion of this journey, which had been so enjoyable, light-hearted and gay, as well as profitable

throughout, definitely ends one phase of Oliver's career. It is as though up to this time all the preparations had been in the making for the drama, the real work, of his life. He had been learning his parts, preparing his work, directing its course, and absorbing all the technique of living with meticulous care. He could play almost any rôle that the new land might require. He could teach his students from an abundance of knowledge, acquired and formulated by untiring and unceasing work. He could preach to the wise and the humble with equal power, conviction and understanding. He could join in with their work and give wise counsel to the legislators of the Province. Nor was the rôle of the jester forgotten. Was it not a new land, where as yet most of the people were young and gay and optimistic, where the joy of living was evident on every side, and where the young could best understand the merry groups, the frivolities, the hopes and the needs of the young? One sees the curtain of this stage of life roll back, a young man, just twenty-eight years of age, as yet not fully conscious of his real power, steps forth, looks for an instant at this vast audience. The audience which is his West measures his stature in that same instant and there they took each other to their hearts. From this time on Oliver worked for, loved and strove to help this great land, and the Province of Saskatchewan gratefully and kindly accepted his gifts, and with unstinted applause approved the part he played.

Mrs. Floyd, in the lengthy extract just quoted, has made reference to the meeting of Dr. Oliver with Miss Margarita Cowling, a meeting of great significance to his whole future and, indeed, to the highest interests of Western Canada, though at the moment nothing would have surprised either of

The Life of Principal Oliver

them more than such a prediction. From the very first rencontre they discovered that they were meant for one another, and surely if any man were happy in his "help-meet" through life, he was Edmund Oliver. Miss Cowling was born at Woodbridge, not far from Toronto, one of a family of four girls, daughters of Robert Cowling and Lucy Watson. She attended collegiate and then matriculated at the University of Toronto, intending to complete her Arts course. The family belonged to the Methodist Church, which at that time was carrying on an interesting evangelical work among the Italians in the city. Miss Cowling's special gifts were well known to them, and after a previous year in teaching she was engaged as a primary teacher in trying to save the little folk from drifting back into the mediaeval ways of their old environment. Dr. Oliver was completing his last term at Knox Theological College, when he was so fortunate as to be introduced to her. Both were very busy, and there were few opportunities for closer acquaintance. Nor were these necessary. They understood each other instinctively, and on June 1, 1911, they were married. That summer and the next were spent in Ottawa, where Dr. Oliver was engaged in research for the historical work he had undertaken. The winters and subsequent years were passed in Saskatoon. There their home became a delightful resort for students, friends, and everybody, thanks to the tactfulness, unbounded hospitality and kindli-

ness of Mrs. Oliver. There were born to them five boys: Murray Edmund, September, 1913; John Watson, March, 1917; Gordon Walker, April, 1921; Kent Davidson, August, 1924; Ronald George Robert, December, 1927.

Two of the problems resulting from the opening up of the West have been discussed, the establishment of responsible government, and the growth of educational institutions. A third and not less important one remains—Religion. The churches had a duty to the newly planted and rapidly multiplying communities that sprang into being along the railway tracks, seven or eight miles apart, with almost mathematical regularity. They must provide ordinances of worship for these settlers and their families, many of whom came from the older Provinces, but the task was so stupendous that it seemed fair to bankrupt their resources both of men and of money. Nowhere was the challenge more eloquently stated than in a speech in favour of Church Union delivered by Dr. Oliver at a dinner given in Toronto by Sir James Woods.

I count myself happy, Sir James, to be your guest this evening, and in some humble way to represent the West—if a Westerner can ever be said to be humble. I am not at all accustomed to all this magnificence. As I stand before this great audience, in the midst of all this splendour, my mind goes away back yonder to the plains, to my own folk, to the little schoolhouses and the little churches for which I speak to-night, and I pray God that I may be given the good sense and the good judgment

The Life of Principal Oliver

to enable me to put my case before you in its proper perspective.

May I say first of all that the problems that concern us in the West are not of our own seeking. We never wanted them; they have been inescapable; they are the problems of growing pains. Perhaps we do not realize that it is just a little over fifty years ago that the first foreign missionary of the Canada Presbyterian Church was sent—where to? Saskatchewan. (Note: Dr. Oliver's remark is confined to Ontario. More than twenty years earlier Dr. Geddie had been sent from Nova Scotia to the New Hebrides, and had completed a glorious work there.) We were the foreign field fifty years ago, yet we have sent out foreign missionaries from that field to Formosa. (Applause.)

There has been movement in the Church and there has been growth in the Church. James Nesbitt mixed up a little agriculture with his Gospel, teaching the Indians how to grow wheat, and in 1869 they had a bumper crop of six hundred bushels. Who could have guessed that in less than fifty years you could take all the wheat, all the oats, all the barley, all the rye of Prince Edward Island, of Nova Scotia, of New Brunswick, of Quebec, of Ontario, of Manitoba, of Alberta, and of British Columbia, put them in one big heap, and over yonder put in another heap all the oats, barley, wheat, rye, of Saskatchewan, and ours would be the bigger heap?

Well, my friends, that sort of thing has forced problems upon us. We have had growing pains. And when I tell you that only one acre in ten is tilled as yet, let me tell you we are still going to have growing pains. And that is true of our educational work. For years in the Province of Saskatchewan every morning the school bell rang, every morning they ran the little flag up—because that is the law out there—a new district was organized.

Think of that—a new school district every school morning for years in the Province of Saskatchewan, and we have one person out of two a “new Canadian.” Think what problems all that means to us in the way of growing pains. . . .

Has there been any growth in the Church in all these years? . . . I am going to take an Eastern Presbytery as a normal comparison, just to show how we have had growing pains. . . . I am going to take the Presbytery of Hamilton. In the year 1881 there was one Presbytery of Hamilton, and there was one Presbytery West of the Lakes, the Presbytery of Manitoba. Forty years later there is still one Presbytery of Hamilton, although not one Presbytery of Hamilton *still*—but West of the Lakes there are thirty-eight Presbyteries. . . . In the year 1881 there were sixty-one preaching stations in the Presbytery of Hamilton; forty years later there are seventy-five, a splendid development, twenty-three per cent. In the year 1881 there were 116 preaching stations West of the Lakes; forty years later there are 2,123. . . . What does that mean? Let me tell you what it means. Without betraying my age at all, it means that every Sunday morning since I was born a new preaching station has come into existence West of the Lakes. That means growing pains; that means problems.

In such glowing words as these Dr. Oliver pictured the boundless task that called forth the energies of the churches. The response was magnificent. Few countries can show anything to surpass it. Into every village and hamlet the ubiquitous missionary, often a young student, made his welcome way. Still, with the accelerating rapidity of the

The Life of Principal Oliver

growth, came the ever louder and louder appeal for more and more men. The East could not supply the need, nor could it always be relied upon, for it had its own requirements. The only solution must be found in theological colleges on the prairie. Winnipeg had one, but even that seemed far away. The slogan went forth, wherever there is a university there must be placed upon the campus a Divinity Hall. So, in 1913, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church authorized the institution and appointed Dr. Oliver as Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College, Saskatoon, afterwards to be known as St. Andrew's. There was neither building nor salary, nor the wherewithal for either. There was a subscription list of fifty thousand dollars, only one-tenth in cash. It was a venture. Nevertheless, the contract for the building was immediately let. The material was ordered and delivered, and the work started. But hardly was the foundation completed when "depression" spread its ominous wings over the West and the subscription list shrank to the value of the paper on which it was written. What was to be done? The loan companies became all at once so shy. On the backing of the university small advances were made and the contractor paid. But still no salaries. The Synod took the question up. Part of the givings to the budget were ear-marked for the college, and the crisis was staved over for the moment. An old boarding-house on Albert

Saskatchewan

Avenue was rented. The Principal put up on its decrepit porch the sign, "Presbyterian Theological College," but the students dubbed it, "The Old Barn," which nickname subsequent happy memories transmuted into a term of endearment.

Then came the *War*.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE WAR

Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

JOHN LANGDON DAVIES, in his clever book on "Radio," when introducing the subject of ether waves, imagines two ping-pong balls floating at opposite ends of a tub where the water lies perfectly still. Tap one of the balls sharply so that it bobs up and down, and at the other end of the tub the other ball, which has never been touched, instantaneously bobs up and down in a precisely similar manner. There has been no actual movement of the water. Its molecules remain where they are, but the motion of one ball has been transferred to the other by the medium of waves. Similarly, he goes on to explain that when one electron on a far distant and very tiny atom in the sun jumps its orbit, a corresponding jump takes place among the electrons in the human eye. It is not that any particle has travelled from the sun to the earth in so brief a time, but a wave of a supposed ether has effected the communication. Eddington remarked on many such hypothetical ethers, each scientist finding it advisable to create one to suit his own convenience. But whether this be true or not of the physical world, there is a human and social medium that connects all the activities of mankind,

so that "no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." Neutrality is as impossible among men and nations as it is among the electrons in the stellar spaces. A tragedy happens in a remote corner and the shock is felt around the globe.

So it happened on June 28, 1914, when the foolhardy and ill-advised and worse-protected Archduke of Austria attempted a visit to the disaffected province of Bosnia and to its very capital, Sarajevo. The visit was loudly advertised, the very route published in detail. A band of conspirators lay in wait. A first bomb proved ineffective, but on the return journey from the city hall, the chauffeur of the imperial car took a wrong turning and, when he slowed down to correct his mistake, gave the assassin his chance and both Archduke and Duchess fell before his bullets at a point-blank range of only three yards. The assassin died subsequently in prison, and to-day a monument perpetuates the outrage. Sarajevo is far away from Saskatoon, but the human ether carried the effects of the tragedy there, and even to the remotest bounds of our Dominion in the lonely leagues of the frozen North. The crime gave Berthold and Conrad, these two sinister ministers of Austria, their opportunity. They had been preaching a preventative war, and now was their excuse. An ultimatum was sent to Serbia; but under pressure from the rest of the European Powers, who were anxious to avert hostilities, that country was induced to send a

The Life of Principal Oliver

conciliatory reply, accepting all the Austrian terms, except two, and referring these to The Hague.

But Austria was bent on taking the field, she was so confident of victory and she had the explicit support of Germany. Duplicity, however, was resorted to. The conciliatory reply was kept from the German Kaiser for sixty-two hours, and then he wrote on the margin of the telegram, "A glorious diplomatic victory. There will now be no war." But the perpetrators of this awful crime against humanity had protected themselves against a last moment's hesitation, and by another and direct lie had secured the signature of the Emperor of Austria to a declaration of war. The die was cast, the guns had begun to bark, and twelve million men were set on their march to the grave.

Neutrality was impossible. Civilization was confronted with its tremendous choice between military dictatorship, with all its brutality, and freedom of peoples to govern themselves. A superficial cynicism points to the present Fascist administrations in Germany and Italy, and laughs ironically, "So this is the glorious democracy that our lads went overseas to establish in the world, a militarist tyranny that places toy cannon in the cradle and trains tender limbs to practise the goose step." The criticism is hardly just. The condition of Germany and Italy to-day rather shows from what dangers civilization was delivered. Had we lost the war, we should have been in the same sad plight;

our liberties would have been confiscated, and our sons drafted for "cannon fodder." But a contemporary survey of the British Empire finds it rejoicing in all its old-time traditional freedom. Our ecclesiastical assemblies can gather. Fiery speeches against war and armament can be delivered, and the passionate orators are in no danger of cooling their ardour in a concentration camp at eventide. This blood-bought privilege to speak and write as conscience dictates is the foundation of all true social progress and the safeguard of human happiness; and its preservation was perhaps the noblest fruit of victory.

The outbreak of the war came as such a sudden and dreadful blow that the minds of men were stunned. The world reeled and lost its balance. The Church found itself in a particularly difficult and delicate situation. People naturally looked to it for leadership; but for the moment its eyes, too, were blurred, and it knew not which way to turn. Things happened with such appalling swiftness. In those warm, sultry August days every one was relaxed. All who could get away were on holiday. Conference with one another was well-nigh impossible. But as the terrible work went on, the issues became clearer, and possibly the dilemma of the Church more distinctly defined. On the one hand the Head of the Church was the Prince of Peace. The brutality, cruelty, agony of the battlefield, the burning of homes, the gasping of innocent

The Life of Principal Oliver

little children from poisoned gas, which came later, were the very antithesis of that Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus came to establish. How, then, could it be possible that His followers under any circumstances should sanction the use of arms, and give their blessing to this holocaust of destruction? The ministers who can recall those awful moments in August, 1914, know the agony through which the Church passed; and it is their earnest prayer and hope that such a crisis may never come again.

But the question had two sides. On the other hand appeared the spectre of a blatant, ruthless militarism, that with mailed fist and cold-blooded inhumanity was planning to convert the fair garden of this earth into a veritable Hell, red with the blood of slaughtered hosts, and enslaved to the ambition of some war-like gambler, who, without conscience, was prepared to stake the lives of millions of his people on the doubtful chances of the battle-field. Had that menacing spirit of militarism triumphed, had the sword established itself as the only arbiter of the nations, then peace itself and the happiness of mankind would have for ever fled this earth. When the Minotaur devoured its yearly quota of youths and maidens from Athens, Theseus buckled on his armour, tracked the cruel monster to his den in the Labyrinth in Crete, slew him and delivered his fellow citizens from a "reign of terror." And Theseus has been accorded the applause of history. A modern Minotaur had appeared upon the scene,

prepared to exact his toll of millions of lives to satisfy his lust and avarice. How was this monster to be dealt with? to be fêted and pampered? to be admired after the manner of Nietzsche as a blonde beast rampaging through the earth? Or was it to be firmly seized, shackled, chained, and rendered harmless? If this was to be done, it must be done collectively. To give in to the brute or to feed him piecemeal, a nation at a time, was only to sharpen his appetite, and endanger the future of our civilization. This is how the crisis of 1914 appeared at the time to the ordinary British and Canadian citizen; nor has the cloudy controversy that has subsequently ensued obscured the main issues of the situation. One thing was clear. There must be united effort. To remain neutral was to shirk one's responsibility to mankind; and, had all joined in, how different the course of history would have been. A very significant conversation is reported as having taken place between Lord Charnwood, the distinguished author of the *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, and Theodore Roosevelt. Lord Charnwood asked the ex-President whether there would have been a war if the United States had stood by Britain in 1914. And the American, after pondering a few moments, replied that he did not see how there could have been, Germany would not have been so mad. All this must be carefully taken into consideration before judgment is passed on the Church. A buccaneering expedition had been set on foot.

The Life of Principal Oliver

Concerted action would check its dangerous progress. What was Britain to do? Help or stand aloof? What was the Church to say?

It has always to be remembered, too, that the situation was all the more exasperating because of the treatment of Belgium. That little kingdom cherished no hostility to Germany. Belgians were summering in large numbers on the Rhine. The two countries traded with one another. Belgium was guilty of no injury, not even of any international discourtesies, yet within a few days her sons were slain, her cities were bombed, her famous libraries burned and her treasures destroyed, and this not because of anything that she had done but because of the Schlieffen military plan on which Germany built her hopes, and which was based on an invasion of France through this friendly country, and this, too, in defiance of a treaty, which was contemptuously described as "a scrap of paper." It is difficult to recall or to exaggerate the alarm and indignation that such treatment of an innocent people aroused at the time. The call for help came to Britain, and she responded. Britain, of course, involved Canada. In those days the question had not even been stirred as to the possible neutrality of a British Dominion.

This brief review of the crisis is intended to recall the attitude of the Empire, how it regarded events, and why it was that the Church felt called upon to take the stand it did. There was no desire for war,

nor glorifying of it, indeed, a bitter hatred against it, but a stern resolve that there should be an end of this menacing militarism. This devil was to be cast out. It would take prayer and fasting, prayer and self-sacrifice. The supreme hour of the Cross had come, and the Church would not flinch. Any one who cares to read the published sermons of that feverish time will find this spirit breathed in every line. But there was another and more appealing reason why the Church should bestir herself and play her special part in this world-wide tragedy. The young men who filled the ranks had gone forth from our own homes. They had gone forth at first voluntarily, and they were the fairest and bravest of our youth, the very flower of our manhood. Here in Canada, so far away from the disturbance, the promptness of the response to the call will ever remain a marvel. The plough was left in the furrow, the axe at the root of the tree, the fisherman's boat tossed idly at anchor, the mechanic laid down his tools, the merchant closed his books, the artisan forsook his bench, and the scholar his studies. No one wanted the war, all hated it like poison; but, tightening the belt, each said we must see this thing through. Thus they came from all over Canada, at first to the local recruiting stations, and then to the first large assembling camp at Valcartier. Of the first contingent the overwhelming proportion were British. "Remittance men," some of them were called, who, ill adapted to the rough-and-tumble

The Life of Principal Oliver

ways of Canada, had not been able to establish themselves independently in the country of their adoption and were subsidized by monthly cheques from home. But if the term ever had any obloquy attached to it, the first hour of the war completely wiped that off. But the second contingent was composed largely of our Canadian-born youth, who sailed away so gaily to where the crosses were multiplying rapidly among the fields where poppies grew in Flanders. Weary hearts and anxious prayers followed the flotillas that, now in endless succession, were sailing from our shores. The Church could not remain inactive. These young men needed the hope, the comfort, the blessed assurance of the Gospel, that God was near them in those dark and terrible moments when Death was reaping his awful harvests. They needed Christ, "Christ in Flanders."

A chaplain's service on a very efficient scale was immediately organized, and applications to join it poured in from the clergy of all denominations and of all types. The weather-tanned home missionary was there, much at ease in a camping outfit. But there, too, was the soft-handed city preacher, trying hard to maintain a cheerful smile in these rude circumstances, so far away from his comfortable study fire. Even the theological professor had strayed into these unusual surroundings, and was struggling to fit in strange new terms of command with his Greek and Hebrew roots. The story goes

about Dr. Kent, now Principal of Queen's Theological College, then on the staff of Pine Hill, and who was serving at the time as a combatant officer, that he had just brought his company through a military exercise with unusual smartness and neatness. The General, conducting the inspection, sent for him to commend his skill, and then asked, "What were you in civil life?" "Professor of Divinity," was the surprising answer. "Good Heavens!" was the impromptu exclamation of the superior officer.

Any one who knew Dr. Oliver would have looked for him in the army. It is true his work in the West was just beginning, his plans for St. Andrew's College were being put into shape. Heavy responsibilities were depending upon him. But the sight of "the boys in khaki" marching away was more than his tormented spirit could brook. He offered his services and was appointed chaplain to the 196th Western Universities Battalion, and was sent to Camp Hughes. He seized his opportunities to aid the soldiers with his usual readiness and insight into their wants. A Regina citizen, who had just lost his son in the war, gave him the generous gift of three hundred dollars, with which he was able to equip a recreation hut and make it comfortable with stoves when the chill weather came in October of that year (1916). He had set up also a little library for the diversion of his men, and also in accordance with his principles that life's moments were precious

The Life of Principal Oliver

and no opportunity should be lost of improving the mind.

When a little later the battalion was transported to England, he had these books packed and shipped to Bramshott, where it was understood these soldiers would be quartered. In the army, however, anything and everything happened. Some of the troops went to Bramshott, but Dr. Oliver found himself at Bexhill. This called for two libraries, one at each camp, and he financed them both out of his own resources, none too ample. The initial outlay was about one hundred and fifty dollars, with a further weekly contribution of ten dollars for maintenance. Later on the Khaki College sought to meet this necessity; in 1916 it was not yet in existence.

While at Camp Hughes there came to him one of those real tests that try a minister's character and reveal his faith in his ideals. One of the most honourable and outstanding positions in the Canadian educational world was the principalship of Queen's University, which had been adorned by the brilliant administration of Principal Grant, and from which Principal Gordon, having further extended its activities, was proposing to retire. Dr. Oliver was now approached and asked if he would be prepared to accept such a responsibility. It was a very flattering offer, and must have caused him much self-sacrifice to refuse. Queen's was a well-equipped institution, with endowments and

government aid, while St. Andrew's Theological College was just in its infancy, and "without visible means of support." Indeed, it was at the Assembly of this year that he amused the guests at a Knox dinner by saying, that for a theological college there were three requisites, "faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of these is charity." Nevertheless, he first took the existing circumstances into consideration: the effect upon the soldiers if he had to leave the army to assume this "cushy job" would have been extremely hurtful, in any case his affection for them would never have permitted it. Further, he felt the need of the West. If he did possess any talents, surely here, in this new country with its dawning possibilities, was the most fruitful place for investment. So, without so much as consulting his usual mentor in all such difficulties, President Murray of the university, he wrote and had his name withdrawn. This decision was vital for him and identified his future service with his beloved West. Perhaps this is the best place to mention how, some years afterwards, the temptation was repeated and under circumstances that were particularly seductive. In the first year of his Moderatorship, the Presidency of Dalhousie University at Halifax, N.S., became vacant through the retirement of Dr. Stanley Mackenzie. Dr. Oliver's name inevitably came forward, but now the golden West had been disillusioned. Depression and drought had wrought fierce havoc in the economic

The Life of Principal Oliver

field, the Church's finances had fallen off, and it was not possible to maintain the new St. Andrew's adequately, the staff at one time being actually reduced to a salary of one hundred dollars a month; he had himself a growing family to support, and here a way of escape seemed to open from all these difficulties. A telegram from prominent members of the Board of Governors was handed to him at the Maritime Conference in Sackville, N.B., requesting an interview. He was persuaded to go so far; but when he discovered the acceptance of the appointment would involve either his resignation of the Moderatorship, which was probably impossible, or the neglect of its solemn obligations, he remarked to the writer of this memoir, "If God had wished me to accept such a position, He would have opened the way so that I could have done so honourably." He asked, therefore, to have his name withdrawn. These decisions reveal the man, and they are the irrefutable answer to those who doubt the sincerity of the ministry.

In due time Dr. Oliver found himself in France discharging the heart-rending duties that fell to the lot of a chaplain. Let his own graphic words tell the story. The following is from notes of a speech found in a small loose-leaf pocketbook:

I have not risen to my feet to talk about the War. I do not want to talk about the War. What is more, I do not want to hear anybody else talk about the War. I am fed up on the whole subject and the whole ex-

perience. I want rather to get away into green pastures and linger by the side of quiet waters, to escape that utter depression of soul that overwhelms me when I think of Ypres and Passchendaele, the hell of Lens, the mad ruin that stretches from Vimy and Arras to Cambrai and Valenciennes. The sheer havoc and appalling desolation of it all haunts me every time my mind roams across the rolling lands of Picardy into old Artois and the flat wastes of Flanders. Picture if you can the choicest wheat fields of our Western plains churned into yawning gravel pits, streaked with long rows of zigzag, gleaming chalk trenches, with an occasional tree trunk standing, twisted and bent and smashed, the song birds all frightened from the skies, but crows calling to their mates, and far aloft a great wheeling bird swooping down in wide circling paths on some black errand, but, higher still—thank God no war can change that—His Clouds and His Sun shining in its strength. . . .

Not all that went forth will come back. They know that well who laid many a lad to rest in grey army blankets under the soil of France. You know it better whose arms stretch forth in the dark watches of the night to welcome the boy that never comes. They sleep on many a hillside yonder in Picardy. There's scarce a cemetery from Amiens to Ypres or from Boulogne to Mons that is not for ever sacred with the ashes of Canadian dead. There stand the little white crosses, line on line, so pitifully meagre to mark the spot where the heroes sleep, and yet so adequate, for they are white, and it is the cross, pure and triumphant, the symbol of the death that brought us life.

In the C.C.S. some chaplains have buried ninety to one hundred at a time. I have never buried more than twenty at once, but that is enough when it is the best life blood in the land. And what an experience it is on a grey October morning, with the mists hanging like a pall

The Life of Principal Oliver

over the French hills, to read the simple service over the grey silent forms, to pray God to help you when the word shall come, and to send forth the little notes to earth's ends, each piercing some woman's heart, but giving joy to know that at the end the minister of Christ was there.

I have buried soldiers from every land, not excluding even Germany, for the enemy, too, must be interred and Britain wages no war against the wounded and the dead. I know no stranger emotion than is stirred by burying the enemy's dead with our Christian service. Usually there is no one there but yourself. In such a moment even War fades into nothingness as we read, "I am the resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord."

Tell them, O Guns, that we have heard their call
That we have sworn and will not turn aside
That we will onward till we win or fall
That we will keep the faith for which they died.

These men are not dead. They have been woven into the texture of our national heritage, and live, the richest possession and most meaningful of our common life.

After Passchendaele Dr. Oliver found himself attached to No. 3 Hospital, well known to so many soldiers and situated on the summit of the hill at Boulogne, overlooking the Channel. His duties were not so nerve racking, but they made heavy drains on his sympathy and patience. Every morning and afternoon he made his rounds, taking down notes at each bedside, then to his hut to write those precious letters home, sometimes bringing hope and gladness, sometimes containing the last words

of love to friends far away from the dying soldier. He averaged about forty letters a day, and after an action at the front sometimes more. Hardly a hamlet across Canada where one of these is not still treasured. But then there came the replies in thousands, asking for more details, and what could poor Oliver do? Human capacity has its limits—even Oliver's. He did what he could. Amid the feverish excitement of battles the work of the chaplain was naturally obscured and he would not have it otherwise. His ministries were those of conversation and correspondence; but no one who has ever visited a military hospital, or touched the human side of army life, will ever underestimate its significance. It was while at No. 3 Boulogne that the order came to undertake educational work, the result of which was the organization of "The University of Vimy Ridge," and for this valuable service he received special mention in despatches and was promoted to the rank of colonel.

Some account of this unique enterprise may be in order, and as the writer was associated with it from its inception, perhaps it may be interesting to describe how it arose. It had, indeed, many beginnings, as more than one educationalist had felt that something should be done to improve the minds of the men and fit them for positions on their return to Canada at the close of the war, and that for this purpose the evening hours in training camps or when the battalion came out on rest might be utilized.

The Life of Principal Oliver

But before fully-organized plans authorized by the universities could be put in operation, informal efforts to this end had been attempted. The fifth division had been mobilized at Witley Camp in England and fully trained and equipped to be transported as a body to France. More than once the order to move was expected. Leave was cancelled and everything in readiness, but the order never came. The casualties during that terrible summer of 1917 had been so appalling, that Canada was forced to the decision that it could maintain no more than her present four divisions, and the fifth was ultimately broken up and drafted into the others.

But during these long summer months of waiting there was considerable leisure. A philosophy club met every Tuesday evening under the pine trees, and on one occasion so attracted the attention of the Fabian Society, which was holding its annual conference at the neighbouring town of Godalming, that an invitation came from that body to hear a lecture from Bernard Shaw. The subject handed to him was, "Is the Church Necessary for the Realization of the Christian Ethic?" He began in his epigrammatic way, "No. If a man were a Christian, he would be put in prison. If a soldier were a Christian, he would be shot," and for three-quarters of an hour entertained the men in his unique fashion.

Another source from which classes arose was a

series of remarkable revival meetings conducted by Rev. Dr. Cameron of Toronto. They created so deep an impression that admittance finally had to be restricted to ticket. Many hundred came forward to the closing Communion. Of these, forty dedicated themselves to the ministry, and desired to begin their studies forthwith. The Y.M.C.A. co-operated most effectively and helped to provide facilities, and work was begun. It so happened that General Hughes came on a tour of inspection one evening and found these forty students toiling over the Gospel of St. Mark. Somehow he mistook the textbook for Herodotus and sent an enthusiastic report to London about what his men were doing. Headquarters encouraged the movement and greater facilities were put at his disposal.

The real organizer of the Khaki University, properly so called, was, however, Dr. H. M. Tory, at that time President of the University of Alberta. He visited the camps at the opportune moment, realized the possibilities of education, threw himself enthusiastically into the work, returned to Canada, enlisted the hearty support of the universities, secured the granting of credits, and eventually had a special Service established which after the Armistice centred at Ripon, England, and carried on classes until all the troops were demobilized. But though a remarkable story, it takes us too far afield from the immediate purpose of this book.

A similar movement originated in France, perhaps

The Life of Principal Oliver

spontaneously, perhaps in an indirect way influenced by what was going on in England. The credit rests with General Lipsett who, after Passchendaele, considering what might be in the interests of his wearied men then "out on rest," devised the idea of evening classes. Unhappily, the officer selected for this duty became a casualty, and the General knew not where to turn. It was at this moment that the writer arrived in France to render any assistance that might be possible. After a very pleasant conversation with General Currie at Camblain-l'Abbé, he was instructed to wait on General Lipsett, the upshot of which was an order to Dr. Oliver to report at once to the 3rd Division. The General had not been over-anxious to have a chaplain in charge of the work, as such an appointment was apt to stir latent denominational antagonisms, but he was finally mollified by the assurance that the learned doctor was not so much of a clergyman as he was an educationalist. As Oliver had been Dr. Tory's choice, all parties were thus quite satisfied and a wonderful work begun. No task could be more congenial to Oliver than this, and he threw the whole weight of his extraordinary power of organization into the scheme. Seated there in the Curé's study at Fervais, with nothing but a single candle to light and warm us, he elaborated point by point a feasible plan and submitted it to General Lipsett, who gave it hearty approval. He named it the "University of Vimy Ridge," and chuckled

when he learned that the German University at their front was established just two days later. The various battalions of the 3rd Division were paraded in the large Y.M.C.A. marquee at St. Hilaire, the first lecture being given by the writer, and well he remembers it, the period being punctuated every few minutes by the deafening roar of aeroplanes starting on that lovely winter day to scout over the enemy lines.

While the battalions were thus out on rest, excellent work went on, but the big German push in the spring of 1918 suspended all further study. Finally victory began to come the way of the Allies, and the writer remembers one calm October day standing with Dr. Oliver amidst the ruins of the Hindenburg Trench, all around nothing but desolation and twisted barbed wire, not a soul in sight save one major, who thrust his head out of a dugout and waved a cheery greeting. "Now," said Oliver, "we are to start a university here, but how?"

Happily there was not long to wait. November 11th brought peace at last to an over-wearied and war-scarred world. Classes were reorganized. Soldier students who wished it were sent to Dr. Tory's centre at Ripon, until the last platoon had departed from France and the last Canadian bugle call had died away among the sand dunes at Etaples.

Dr. Oliver's contribution to the soldier is not easily over-rated. He did much for both mind and body. But we must not leave the impression that the

The Life of Principal Oliver

Canadian army was the only one that fostered an educational movement. The British had their classes as well.

Education was not without its humorous side. An officer in the British army, who had charge of this department, tells how one time a Scotch Jock, carrying heavy fatigue buckets and looking into a hut and observing others apparently lolling at their ease, asked what it was and, discovering that it was a school, immediately applied for admission. The officer, quickly taking in the situation, put the unexpected poser, "What subjects do you wish to study?" The poor man was nonplussed. "Languages?" suggested the officer. "Yes," said the desperate soldier, "languages." "Which?" That was another poser. "Hebrew?" suggested the officer. "Yes," came the still more desperate reply, "Hebrew."

CHAPTER VII
CHURCH UNION IN CANADA

*Behold how good a thing it is
And how becoming well
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell.*

—SCOTTISH PSALTER

ONE of the outstanding questions that challenged the Christian Church during the lifetime of Principal Oliver was the greater unity of Christendom. Just as the War was won by unification of the front, so it was felt that the divided condition of the followers of Christ was proving an increasing handicap to the progress of His Kingdom, and close co-ordination was imperative if it were to triumph. But though this desirable goal had long prevailed in a doctrinaire form and had been preached from many pulpits and proclaimed in many ecclesiastical Assemblies, and although successful unions had frequently been happily effected between severed sections of the larger denominations, it remained for Canada to attempt the experiment in a broader field and to combine churches that had had no direct affiliation in either their origin or their history, that indeed at times had been bitterly critical of one another. While considerations of a more idealistic and spiritual nature were the invisible moving forces in this direction,

The Life of Principal Oliver

there can be no question that the economic situation in Western Canada was the active factor that precipitated the crisis. In this may be found a powerful example of the historic truth that laid such a vivid hold on the imagination of Dr. Oliver and was indeed the inspiration of his great book, *The Winning of the Frontier*, that the progress of man's spiritual institutions is determined not altogether, perhaps not so much, by logic, philosophy, and "the battles of the intellect," as by the urgent demands and exigencies of frontier life. The West was the frontier, Dr. Oliver was a Westerner, and so he inevitably became an outstanding figure in the movement, and heavy responsibilities rested upon his judgment and decision.

This great historic principle of the supreme importance of the frontier finds almost classical expression in the opening pages of his book.

On the Frontier ever abide Need and Opportunity. The hardy outriders of civilization do battle there with the primitive and the elemental. The pioneers themselves, of course, do not receive the promises, but they see them afar off and are persuaded of them. They wage a patient warfare of faith and courage, of poverty and increasing toil. They are pathfinders for all that follow. But it is not trails in the forests alone that the pioneer blazes, nor tracks across the prairies, but fresh paths of action and new lines of public policy. In the sparse settlements on the Frontier, where need is greatest and the social barriers of older communities do not divide, spiritual issues most quickly emerge and are most

Church Union in Canada

frankly and most hopefully faced. The Councils of the Church may be held, and decisions registered at great centres, as in Jerusalem, but the most vital problems ever arise in, and the solutions must always be found for, Joppa and Caesarea, Antioch and Galatia—among and for the Gentiles and on the growing frontier. For a Church advances most vitally, not in the stately liturgies of the Cathedral in the metropolis, but through understanding and fostering its missions on the Frontiers. It is a law of Christ's Kingdom that the Church that neglects the "uttermost part of the earth," whether in its own land or across the seas, does so at grave peril to its spiritual life. For the Frontier signifies Need and Opportunity. And thither the pioneering Spirit of Christ has ever beckoned His followers, to serve the Frontier. . . . As we shall see, Frontiers are not always geographical. They are spiritual and cultural as well. The Frontier demanding the Church's message and work for its untouched area may be the neglected slum of an old city no less than the unreached community on the farthest verge of settlement. But in Canada, just because of the primitive conditions and pioneer settlements characteristic of a young and growing country, it has been the expanding geographical Frontier that has afforded the most striking challenge to the Church. In the days that have intervened since Cartier and Champlain the geographical Frontier of Canada has been pushed from the trackless forests of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes westward to the rolling prairies and northward to the rushing Yukon; the growth of the Dominion has witnessed a concentration of economic control in great centres. And political interest has too often followed sectional division. But the winning of the Frontier has been, and still is, the controlling feature of religious policy, and the constant motive of Church enterprise in Canadian life.

The Life of Principal Oliver

The truth of the principle, thus fully and eloquently proclaimed by Principal Oliver, has been curiously and graphically illustrated in the stirring religious history of the Dominion. One would have thought that the Roman Catholic Church, so uncompromising in its creed and so rigid in its practice, would have been proof against the solvent influences of a frontier as remote as the wildernesses of Canada were in the seventeenth century from the seat of authority at Rome. But apparently it has not been so. When Jacques Cartier landed at Gaspé on July 24, 1534, and erected a cross thirty feet high and under the crossbar the *fleur-de-lys* with the proclamation, "Long live the King of France," and when all knelt down and worshipped it in the presence of the Indians and made signs to them and pointed to heaven, they felt that in some mysterious way they were winning savagery to Christianity. Evidently expectations were not realized. The natives only saw in it another totem pole, and resented what seemed to be an intrusion into their religious and territorial domain. The mere symbol of the Cross was not sufficient. Again the following century, when the heroic Father Le Caron undertook his difficult mission to the Hurons he writes, "For, alas, when we see such a great number of infidels, and nothing but a drop of water is needed to make them children of God, one feels an ardour one cannot express to labour for their conversion and to sacrifice for it one's repose and

life." Once more the hope was disappointed. "The drop of water" was inadequate to tame the savage breast. Clearly the Canadian frontier demanded a modification of methods from those which would have been acceptable in a Catholic-trained country like Europe. Rome responded with radical alterations. In the middle of the seventeenth century Bishop Laval arrives, grasps the situation, converts the seminary into a missionary institution, establishes under it an order of "movable curés." The Church became as flexible as the frontier. "With a servant," writes Colby, "to paddle him and carry his portable chapel, the curé of the seventeenth century spent his life in making a perpetual series of rounds, through rivers, lakes and forests at all weathers, at all seasons." The parish of the curé was the frontier. His method was now instruction.

But the modifications produced were not confined to method and practice. Fundamental attitudes rooted in history were revolutionized, and nowhere was this more startling than the adoption of the principle of religious toleration. Catholic and Protestant were to live side by side under the same flag and in perfect harmony, each preserving his own autonomy, and each protected in the exercise of his own rights. Hand in hand with this growing spirit of toleration there developed also an ecclesiastical independence, that tended to loosen the bonds that bound the new land to the customs of the old.

The Life of Principal Oliver

But it is needless to labour further what must be obvious to every thinker, that the fluid conditions on the advancing van of civilization do demand adjustments that would never have been permitted, perhaps not even foreseen, under the more stable social environment of older worlds. And if this be evident even in Catholicism, how much more inevitable where Protestantism prevailed.

So it has happened in our own time. Sectarianism, that had rooted itself and thrived in more settled countries, began to wilt on the open prairie soil, and in its place sprang up a plant with blossoms of a richer promise and a less sour and bitter fruit. The impression must not be conveyed, however, that the idea of Church Union had its origin in Western Canada. It had had a long and checkered history from the days when Constantine the Great attempted to impose it upon the Christian world by the mandate of imperial authority and even the force of arms, and from the age when Hildebrand, arrogating to the Papal See sovereignty over things temporal as well as things spiritual, asserted its claim to the obedience of kings and princes. In recent times, as well, its ideals had been upheld by bishops and synods in the Anglican Communion. Tentative approaches had been made to both the Greek and Latin churches with the hope of a united Christendom; but the praiseworthy intention never seemed to get beyond pious resolutions, probably because one hand was busy in strengthening

denominational loyalties, while the other was extended in these fraternal greetings.

Other than ecclesiastical influences, however, were at work, and more effective than the dreams of theologians in their studies, particularly on the American Continent. Religious education had a marked trend towards interdenominationalism. The Christian Endeavour Movement leaped gleefully over all sectarian barricades. At Sunday School and Young People's Conventions the bigoted man was treated as "the joker in the piece," and denominationalism was made common sport. Laughter was evoked by vivid descriptions of separate sects each trying to hold its little corner in heaven. An incident was recaptured from the Bass Rock in Scotland where the Covenanters were imprisoned, and where it happened that two men of different persuasions were placed in the same cell. One of them wrote to his minister to ask for advice. "When we both have prayers, what shall I do?" he queried. "Shall I join in with the other man? or when he is at his devotions shall I keep silent? or ought I to make a noise?" The story is very likely apocryphal. It mattered not, the audience was entertained. Then, of course, the coloured man was introduced. He had been asked if he belonged to "the army of the Lord." "I belongs to the navy," was his response. He was a Baptist. Or, again, when Moody was reported to have called on a Southerner of some local distinction, and finding him not at home, asked

The Life of Principal Oliver

the coloured servant, "Is your master a Christian?" "No, sah," came the prompt reply, "he is a Presbyterian." These are but one or two gleanings from a whole bushel of chestnuts, familiar to all who can recall these cheerful and often crowded gatherings of a generation ago. They provoke a yawn to-day, but they did the trick, they made the common mind ashamed of its denominationalism.

Though the ground was prepared in this pleasant fashion, Union did not come. The frontier had to make its call of need and opportunity before the large religious bodies could be stirred to activity. The challenge to the churches had to come from the West. These great organizations had moved on to the prairie with their people and had made strenuous efforts to establish themselves there. The Anglicans were gallantly led by men like Archbishop Machray, who died in 1904, Primate of all Canada. The Methodists had on their roll of honour a name like James Evans, the inventor of "birch-bark talk," a simple, complete syllabic system for the Indian languages, reducing Cree to an alphabet of eight consonants and four vowels, so that within a few days an Indian could be taught to read his own language; there were other names like Rundle and the McDougalls. The Presbyterians, too, had their Goliath of Gath, a stout-hearted indomitable Scotchman, Dr. James Robertson, tracking out his fellow countrymen to the remotest limits, or filling the lumberman's

shanty with his hearty laugh as he asked for "the September towel," after having been handed the rag that had done duty for the whole outfit that morning. These were all heroes in their way, devoted followers of their Lord, but also possessed of a firm conviction about the superiority of their own special denomination. Their services were indeed for all the West, but their names are the private glory of their own churches.

How, then, did the Union Movement start? What had appeared on the frontier to make the demand for it so urgent?

It may seem an idle play on words to say that Union was due to "the binder." Nevertheless, these new contrivances of applied science have far-reaching economic effects, and these, in turn, require unexpected ecclesiastical adjustments. Like the motor car and the radio, though in lesser degree, the binder was such an invention. Before its advent the farmer reaped his golden harvest, but painfully, through the laborious use of "the cradle." Help was not plentiful, and he could sow only a limited crop. His farm was consequently small; and the population of a community lived in relative proximity. But with the advent of the binder, which could do the work of a dozen men, the crops increased and the farms were greatly extended. One man would cultivate a half section, a whole section, and the writer can recall passing one farm that comprised six whole sections, six square miles.

The Life of Principal Oliver

Under these circumstances a whole countryside would be cultivated and yet the population be very sparse, too sparse altogether to maintain the luxury of different denominational churches. This soon became only too apparent to the broad-minded superintendents of the Methodist and Presbyterian Home Missions in the West. One can imagine them meeting under the blue over-arching sky on the level prairie, the yellow harvest stretching to the far horizon in the clear transparent atmosphere, and broken only occasionally, and that at long intervals, by the humble shacks of the pioneer. There was no opening for two churches. One can see these two honest but assiduous officials looking into each other's faces inquiringly. They loved one another, of course, but each was a very great inconvenience to the other at that particular time and in those circumstances. What were they to do? They did the only thing surely that Christian sense could suggest. They sat down and talked it over together. Duplication there must not be. The costly and bitter yoke of meaningless controversies must not be fastened on the neck of this new land. They would not be the agents of so unworthy a task. Sectarian rivalries should end here. Surely there would be found among the followers of Christ sufficient wisdom, faith and charity to find a pathway to agreement. And thus, once more, the frontier triumphed over rooted prejudices and over racial and religious misunderstandings, and the far-

Church Union in Canada

reaching movement toward Church Union was set in operation.

Just exactly where a great enterprise takes its start is as difficult to determine as the remotest source of the Mississippi. We see the "mighty Father of Waters" issuing from Lake Bemidji as a brook one can easily wade, but that is not its very beginning. Its furthestmost origin should have to be sought in some obscure marshy spot where a tiny trickle threaded its pathway from a small bubbling spring. Where did Church Union in Canada arise? Who first proposed it? Who first dreamed of it? These are questions impossible to answer. Speeches, discussions, proposals were many. Among others the writer published an article on Union with the Methodists in *The Theologue*, the magazine of the Presbyterian College, Halifax, N.S., in 1900, for which he received no little criticism. The overt and official act, however, took place at the Methodist General Conference in Winnipeg in 1902, where Principal Patrick, Dr. Bryce and Dr. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor) made powerful appeals for it, and where the General Conference responded by the appointment of a committee, and the first step was taken that twenty-three years afterwards led to its final consummation.

The road was none too smooth. The obstacles encountered at times seemed almost insurmountable. There were lions in the path and, like Christian climbing the Hill of Difficulty, not a few were sorely

The Life of Principal Oliver

tempted to turn back. The real problem was not so much in the realm of doctrine. For many years Arminian and Calvinist had proclaimed a truce. Only tales reminiscent of old-time feuds lingered on, as, for instance, when a Calvinist declared, "You Arminians seem to me like a bird sitting on the branch of a tree and singing all day long, 'Free grace, free grace,' and then falling kerflop to the ground"; and the Arminian replied, "You Calvinists seem to me like a bull-frog that has stuck his nose out of the slime and croaks, 'Can't fall, can't fall.' Of course he can't fall, where is he to fall to?" These amenities had long since been dissolved in laughter. The real perplexity was how to reconcile their diverse attitudes to the ministry. John Wesley was at heart a High Churchman, and watched the encroachment of democracy with a jealous eye. He cherished exalted ideas of the clergy, made provision for them, and on their part demanded obedience to the Councils of the Church. In this spirit he organized the most efficient army of evangelists that the religious world has ever known, and spread Methodism around the world with unparalleled expedition. On the other hand, Presbyterianism was based on the parish system. The voice of the people was a determining factor, and expressed itself particularly in the right to choose their own pastor. Any one acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of Scotland knows how fiercely they contended for this privilege. Indeed,

it became more than once the battle-ground of spiritual freedom. They feared, and at times justly, that political influences would place over them ministers whose evangelical zeal would be none too fervent. The Presbyterian system, being parochial, was less flexible and missionary than the Methodist. The minister was called and settled on no time limit, but *aut vitam aut culpam*. His parish was his field, whereas Wesley had said, "The world is my parish." The adjustment of these two polities almost brought a deadlock in the Joint Committee. It was at this point, most likely, that Dr. Duval of Winnipeg told his famous story. Things had come to an *impasse* and the whole enterprise seemed in jeopardy. Denominational lines were being drawn tight and there was an evident determination on both sides not to "give" any further, when this stalwart preacher with a twinkle in his eye arose and told of a patient who was the victim of two diseases, for one of which an acid was necessary, and for the other an emollient. But the acid and emollient were two ingredients that would not mix without destroying each other's efficacy. What was to be done? Well, said the astute adviser, give them to him separately, perhaps they will combine inside. A peal of laughter followed the appropriate anecdote, and the committee resumed its labours in a more optimistic spirit. They took the advice, too, it would seem in the matter of the ministry. Both systems were introduced into the new polity without

The Life of Principal Oliver

complete adjustment, and left to the wisdom and tact of subsequent times. The Settlement Committee and the Call were both retained, and the Pastorate was to be without a time limit. During the time of economic prosperity immediately after the Union, the expansion of The United Church engrossed all its energies, and if men were left without an adequate field, it was expected that time would soon rectify the situation and remove the hardship. With the depression the outlook became greatly altered and the defect in the faulty adjustment more apparent. At the time of writing, this is probably the most acute problem the Church has to face. There are those who feel that by a further process of "whittling" a more workable scheme can be devised, there are others who think that it is practical wisdom to let the two systems continue to function side by side. Under the Settlement Committee there can be both methods, the short pastorate and itineracy for ministers and congregations that so desire it, and at the same time the call and the unlimited pastorate for those congregations and ministers who feel that in their circumstances this is the better plan.

At length the labours of the Committee were completed and "The Basis of Union" on Doctrine, Polity, Ministry and Law was ready for the judgment of the negotiating churches. The Methodists unanimously and graciously accepted it. So did the majority of Congregationalists. But difficulties

Church Union in Canada

arose among the ranks of the Presbyterians. The first vote of the people, taken in 1911, revealed a very powerful minority opposed to the scheme of Union, and, as it had expressed itself freely on certain statements in "The Basis," the hope was cherished that by a revision of the document and the elimination of the objectionable features unanimity would be secured; but this hope was doomed to disappointment. The second vote had, if anything, strengthened the minority, and it became quite evident that mere alterations in the Basis would not remove the grounds of objection. These lay deeper. Whatever arguments might be used in public, there had been revealed "a will not to unite." A split was inevitable, and the Assembly at Winnipeg in 1916 was in sore perplexity. But it was convened on the very threshold of the frontier. Beyond the city limits stretched the endless green of the illimitable prairie, that when the War ended would become the home of millions of immigrants. The need for unity was clamant, and the Church decided to go on. It is true that the following year, at Ottawa, in the anxious period of the European conflict, a truce in the controversy was called, but there was no retraction of the Winnipeg decision, and when the period of truce was over, in 1921, definite steps were taken toward the final goal.

To have reversed the policy of the Church, and to have retraced the path followed for so many years, would indeed have been hardly possible

The Life of Principal Oliver

and must have led to dire confusion. For in the meantime, with the prospect of organic union in the not-far-distant future, congregations on the prairie had begun to combine their forces in various ways. There were first union churches that had broken away completely from the parent stems and were actually forming a new denomination, though on the accepted Basis, and therefore with the explicit purpose of being merged again in the larger United Church of Canada, when it should be achieved. Then there were divers forms of affiliation, sometimes single with just one denomination, sometimes double with both denominations. One interesting, but none too successful, experiment to prevent overlapping was attempted in the earlier stages of the game. Different districts were allotted to the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, and the one was not to intrude on the territory of the other. In certain cases the allocation was made by marking every second railway station as Methodist and the alternate ones as Presbyterian. Referring to this mechanical plan, Dr. Oliver, in addressing the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said that there had been various ways in which a man arrived at his beliefs. Some did so by heredity, and some by mental convictions, but it was reserved for Western Canada to determine a man's creed by the place to which he bought his railway ticket. In all, by 1922 there were from seventy to eighty congregations which had become completely inde-

pendent, and a thousand, including three thousand preaching stations, that had united under some form of affiliation or another. As Dr. Oliver graphically put it, denominationalism had been driven from the open prairie and was restricted to "the arc light and the concrete sidewalk." The disaster to Church life on the Western plains would have been therefore incalculable, had the Church halted in its forward stride at this crisis.

Principal Oliver realized all this, indeed, he had been preeminent as a leader and adviser in the formation of these different united churches. Nevertheless he stressed foremost in his contention for Union the spiritual and moral aspects. He took literally the prayer of our Lord "that they all may be one," and experience with varied forms of co-operation had impressed upon him the conviction that competition and friction were not likely to be eliminated except in one organic body. He felt also the powerful appeal of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Apostle so earnestly strives to avert a division in the infant Church between the Hebrew and the Gentile Christians, where he represents the Church as "the body of Christ," and pleads for its unbroken unity, "for He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us," breaking out in vehement assertion, "there is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

The Life of Principal Oliver

one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." He emphasized also the ethical importance of unity, how so many evils flowed from conflicting interests, and how instead of building up "rival causes" our main effort should be to assist one another. The power of the Church had been sadly weakened by internecine strife. Her critics had pointed to her in scornful irony, saying: "Behold how these Christians love one another." Here on the prairie surely when "the last West" was being opened and occupied, was a noble opportunity to break with the heritage of denominational feuds, and to create a new Church, unfettered by the chains of the past, and fitted with its combined strength to meet the challenge of the future. He then would come down to the economic problem, how could they really maintain in their little towns, which were actually just large villages, more than one Protestant congregation? A small town of two hundred and fifty people attempting to support six separate churches was a sight that gave one pause. The situation was difficult to justify, and indeed was the crowning argument that led the Provinces of the West to go so overwhelmingly for Union.

Dr. Oliver in this way strove to keep the controversy on a high level. He disliked quibbling over petty details or minor local quarrels, he would confine discussion, if he could, to the paramount issues that were involved. He had a clear apprecia-

tion of the strong motives of those who were his opponents in this perplexing question. Presbyterians had a noble heritage, a stirring history that fired the blood, a record of a magnificent struggle for democratic privileges within "the Kirk" and of the intellectual defence of the verities of the faith. Many of them, too, were of Scottish descent, and cynics remarked this implied "a superiority complex." Be this as it may, union with the "Sassenach" was bound to meet with obstacles in the blood. The Shorter Catechism, reverent forms of worship, "the ways of the fathers," dislike of novelty, all made their appeal, an appeal so strong that had it not been for the urgent situation on the frontier it is doubtful if progress would not have been stayed. Dr. Oliver sympathized deeply with this loyal attitude of mind and tried to avoid unnecessary irritation. His aim was not to overthrow but to win his opponents. Of course, in all this he was not alone; he was ably seconded in Saskatchewan by such associates as Rev. Dr. Murdoch MacKinnon, at that time minister of Knox Church, Regina, and Rev. Dr. J. A. MacKeigan, who had recently been inducted into St. Andrew's Church, Moose Jaw, not to speak of the great leaders at the Church's centre. These formed a remarkable triad, that for sagacity, practical wisdom and good sense were probably unsurpassed in the whole Church. Nor must one forget that behind all these activities was a mind and judgment for

The Life of Principal Oliver

which the whole West has had the most profound regard, President Walter C. Murray of the University of Saskatchewan.

At length the long-drawn-out controversy came to a close. The 10th of June, 1925, was the day selected for the fulfilment of so many hopes and prayers. Toronto was the chosen centre, and the Arena, with a capacity for an audience of eight thousand, was secured for the historic event. Admittance was by ticket, and limited packets were supplied to each congregation, so great was the demand. Long before the appointed hour, streams of eager people were flowing into the auditorium. The First General Council, composed of representatives elected from the three uniting churches, assembled in the long grey corridors of the Arena, a group strangely foreign to these surroundings, but adding to them a new importance. The members had travelled from the farthest limits of the Dominion, from the golden sands of the Yukon, the verdant slopes of the Pacific, the deep defiles of the Rockies, the scattered hamlets on the plain, the growing metropolises of central Canada, the vast timberlands and from where in the far East the Atlantic billows break in ribbons of surf on the iron-bound shores of the Maritimes. It was a representative gathering, ministers and laymen, city preachers with their deep sonorous voices, missionaries that had won fame, with their lives of self-sacrifice and adventure at home or abroad, tanned with tropical suns or

Church Union in Canada

toughened with exposure to northern blizzards. They met at first with that joviality that is so noted a characteristic of ministerial gatherings. The latest joke and the hoary chestnut enhanced the cheerfulness, but as the hands of the big clock crept slowly to the appointed hour, a profound silence fell upon the assembled company. It was in a reverent hush that each took his place in the procession. All was ready, all were waiting; so overpowering was the emotion, none could speak. The horologe of Time was to strike a significant hour in the history of the churches. The hands of the clock had reached Ten, and from within, in full-throated volume from eight thousand people, came the strains of the jubilant, triumphant hymn:

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord.

and as the procession passed under the archway into the auditorium:

Elect from every nation
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth.

The details of that unforgettable day are foreign to this biography, but to none among the many thousand spectators was its significance more clearly discernible than to him who bore upon his heart "the Need and Opportunity" of the frontier, Principal Oliver.

The Life of Principal Oliver

Great events and movements have their aftermath. The troubled waters do not readily subside. Property, funds had to be adjusted, and the love of money, as the Apostle so truly remarks, is the root of all evil. A sense of injustice and hardship was natural and, indeed, inevitable. People who had contributed their money to a church and then were compelled to leave it without any kind of compensation felt that they had a grievance, but it was easier to feel it than to have it removed. It is true that St. Andrew's Church in Moose Jaw, which went into the Union, did hand over to the minority six thousand dollars of its funds as a gift. But St. Andrew's was a city church and had funds. Such an example could not be followed by less fortunate congregations that had only deficits to divide. An appeal was therefore made to the Saskatchewan Legislature for a commission to adjudicate these claims, but such a commission could have accomplished very little where churches had no funds and where, for purposes of this kind, it would be impossible to raise them. To have cut the wooden "meeting-house" in half, after the pattern of Solomon's advice, would have only effected death and destruction. Consequently Dr. Oliver and those associated with him asked for a committee to inquire into the extent and nature of the complaint. This was accordingly granted. Some investigation was made. Real grievances doubtless there were,

Church Union in Canada

but many rumours were found to be exaggerations and the committee reported against any action.

So ends this important chapter in Canadian Church history. It has not been possible to include the whole story, which would be a volume or, indeed, a library in itself, but enough has been said to show the paramount place the frontier had in the movement, and consequently the value and services of him whose keen insight had perceived its significance and gave it such skilful direction.

CHAPTER VIII

PRINCIPAL AND MODERATOR

*If this bit of prairies be
Worthier because of me,
Stronger for the strength I bring,
Sweeter for the songs I sing,
Purer for the path I tread,
Lighter for the light I shed,
Richer for the gifts I give,
Happier because I live,
Nobler for the death I die,
Not in vain have I been I.*

MANY were the activities that awaited Dr. Oliver, when, weary and heartsick of the agonizing experiences of the War, he returned once more to Saskatchewan, exchanged his uniform for "mufti" and resumed his work where he had been forced so suddenly and so unexpectedly to lay it down. First, there was the very difficult situation of the new St. Andrew's College over which he had been appointed Principal, but without funds, buildings or students. All these requisites he was expected in some unassisted way to provide. As we have seen, the Synod came to his relief by earmarking for this specific purpose certain amounts that would otherwise have gone into the budget. Better accommodation, too, than the "Old Barn" must speedily be found, if the institution were to make progress. It is true that this primitive and

decrepit building held very tender and sacred memories for those who first gathered there. These were not mere students. Some of them had been overseas, some had done pioneer work on the frontier, all were very eager to fit themselves for the great challenge of the West. Probably no theological college ever breathed a more spiritual atmosphere, none ever showed a finer *esprit de corps*. One writer recalls a trifling, Martha-like service which undoubtedly had its own sweet, if homely, savour. The students "ate themselves," that is, they provided the food from their own funds, while their skilful and economical matron spent the broiling summer canning peas and beans which she had grown at the cost of a few cents. The students also on their week-end preaching excursions would frequently return with gifts of provisions from the farms, carrying "the gospel out and the gobblers in," a not unfair exchange. But however praiseworthy and romantic such devices might be, no institution of learning, least of all a theological college, could long maintain the respect of the community or the dignity of the Church if it continued in circumstances so unsuitable and so inadequate. To the public mind something of the decrepitude of the surroundings would seem to infect the efficiency of the training, though under the master mind of Dr. Oliver this was very far from the case.

Perhaps in no undertaking did his wonderful

The Life of Principal Oliver

resourcefulness show itself to greater advantage and with more excellent results than in the erection of a permanent home for St. Andrew's. A choice site was obtained just at the very gates of the university at the cost of ten thousand dollars, and the present attractive and well-equipped building completed and opened in 1923 at the cost of one hundred and ninety thousand dollars. But where was payment to come from? The Women's Guild supplied furnishings to the amount of twelve thousand dollars. A mortgage of forty thousand dollars was placed upon the property which was paid off in 1933, five years after the depression had begun, a remarkable achievement. For a large share of the balance, and to aid in the annual maintenance of the establishment, Dr. Oliver took advantage of a new situation that was developing in Western Canada due to the influx of many European peoples. The Church had appointed Dr. Colin Young superintendent of "The New Canadian" work. He favoured the policy of planting hostels or "homes" in the vicinity of high schools to give their young people the privileges of education. Dr. Oliver suggested that the top floor of St. Andrew's might be devoted to that purpose. The Home Mission Board readily seized the opportunity as it had so many obvious possibilities attached to it, and cordially came to the assistance of the college with very generous grants. Also, as may be readily conceived, his interest in "Non-Anglo-Saxon"

Principal and Moderator

citizenship found a more intimate form of expression in the closer relationships thus so happily formed. So it was that the major part of his problem was successfully solved.

The planting of a theological college on a campus, where agricultural pursuits had already been blended with classical studies in an altogether novel fashion, led to interesting results. Dr. Oliver, who was always practical in his educational policies and who knew of what service an intelligent and informed ministry could be to the incoming population, so unaccustomed to the new conditions, at once adapted his courses of instruction to use those wider facilities. He stressed Practical Evangelism, Present-day Problems and Rural Leadership. Under the last-named caption he required his students to attend some of the agriculture lectures given upon the campus. One day he met one of them returning to his rooms in St. Andrew's, and after the usual cordial greetings, asked him where he had been. "I have just come from the agriculture class, sir," replied the student. "And what was the subject under consideration to-day," queried the Principal. "Pigsticking," was the unexpected reply. "And how," pursued the divine, "do you think that is going to be of service in the ministry?" "I do not know," answered the perplexed student, "I suppose it is part of the general course in culture." But whether "pigsticking" could be put to any direct

The Life of Principal Oliver

use or not, these young ministers, so practically trained, rendered an inestimable service to Western Canada. In remote and lonely districts the pastor's work is largely done through conversation, and a well-informed mind can give direction and courage, where these are often greatly needed. Perhaps one of Dr. Oliver's most happy contributions to an age that hankered after "the arc lights and the concrete sidewalks," was just to enhance the glory of the country life. He led men back to the farm. What wisdom as well as eloquence in a sermon preached in Westminster Church, Saskatoon, when he compared urban and rural life!

Herein lies much of the tragedy of our city life. We fuss and fume about the trivial and the transient. We have not the long silences behind the plough, and the open heavens eloquently quiet above our heads. We live a life of artificial stimulation. We lose sympathy. We get interested in gossip and transitory events. Our urban life is the life of Jehoiakim, shallow and superficial. We lack sympathy and the sense of the permanent. Why is it that nine times out of ten the council of a rural municipality will make fewer mistakes than a city council? or that the Grain Growers' Convention does more work for the community than any convention of Boards of Trade? It is not simply because their problems are less complex. It is rather the point of view, the type of life. It is because with our urban speculations, our urban picture shows, our urban bars, our urban frivolities, our urban conventionalities and artificialities, we have robbed ourselves of God-given nervous force, and have lost sympathy and a sense of the permanent.

Principal and Moderator

These are words worth pondering over by a generation in search of thrills.

Many tributes have been paid to the unique influence of Dr. Oliver over the student mind. An Anglican clergyman in England writes: "Towards the end of my university course, when troubled by philosophic doubts in matters of faith, Dr. Oliver gave me the wisest and most kindly counsel, and many times since then I have found help in what he said to me of the importance of such matters." A Scotch student, torn between a call to an attractive charge in the homeland, and the strenuous life on the prairie, tells how Oliver's influence, his unsparing devotion to the great challenge of the West, had led him also to stay and throw in his lot with this enthusiastic leader. A minister, a victim of a painful infirmity (and the prairie is not a paradise for a sufferer), adds this significant testimony, "Many, many times I have felt like giving up . . . but the old fighting spirit received from my association with Dr. Oliver has spurred me onward." "In him I have lost the best and dearest personal friend in Canada," writes still another, who was not of us, but had passed his days as "a stranger in a strange land." There lie to hand a whole sheaf of beautiful testimonies, which unhappily there is not space to print, all of which witness to the magnetic influence of this powerful personality.

But college duties, pressing as they were, for he taught both New Testament Greek and Church

The Life of Principal Oliver

History, as well as supervised the work of administration, were by no means all he had to do. There were constant calls outside the city. Preaching as eloquent as his is rare even in our metropolitan pulpits, and he was in continual demand. He could not, of course, begin to accept all the invitations that poured in upon him for anniversary services, often from struggling congregations, where one of his rousing sermons would be a tonic for months to come. He did what he could, he chose not the easy spots. Summer and winter were alike to him. Again and again he faced the suffocating blizzard with a temperature ranging from twenty to forty below zero. He put heart into Saskatchewan. Sometimes the consequences of these trips were embarrassing to his purse as well as to his time. In many quarters he was the best-known, in some places the only well-known, public man, and when some unfortunate individual from one of these sections got stranded in Saskatoon, it was inevitably to Dr. Oliver that he went. Some of these trips, too, brought very unusual experiences and requests, that would have puckered the brow of the Clerk of the General Assembly. On one such occasion he was asked to baptize a group of twenty by immersion and that in a large galvanized-iron washing-tub that had been specially cleansed and prepared for the ceremony. At another time he would marry and baptize in the same home, for in some remote districts a call from a passing clergyman was as

rare as an angel's visit, and the requirements of society were not always possible. Strange attitudes toward religious ceremonies were naturally encountered. On one occasion, when about to administer baptism, the frightened child ran away and hid in the wood pile, the mother screaming after it, "Come here, you little heathen, you are going to be a Christian in five minutes." One doubts whether even High Churchism would regard this as the most worthy example of "Baptismal Regeneration."

Beside even these innumerable calls, there were other important activities that shared Dr. Oliver's strength and his wisdom. He had a prominent place in the councils of the Church. We have noted the part he played on the Church Union committee. His judgment on questions of Religious Education was equally important. It was an age of psychological fads where knowledge, experience and patience were all so necessary. He was not wedded to the old, but carefully tested every step when advance was advisable. The fresh adjustment of ideas and practices that followed Union particularly needed his guiding hand. The Province felt this, and it was no surprise that he was chosen as the first president of the newly formed Conference of Saskatchewan, a post whose responsible duties he discharged with conscientious assiduity.

These journeys far and near left him little time to enjoy the quiet and delights of home life, for which his heart was oftentimes away. But here

The Life of Principal Oliver

his very happy married life brought him beautiful compensation. The West will never be able to repay the debt it owes to the noble Christian qualities of Mrs. Oliver, who seconded her husband so bravely in those exacting projects in which he was involved. The Oliver home was one of the bright spots in Saskatoon. It was called "the half-way house." The door was ever "on the latch" for a perplexed or homesick or discouraged student, or for a wanderer from the East, or for "the stranger within the gates" who expressed himself but haltingly in the English tongue. Under these engrossing circumstances the care of his five "husky lads," as some one has called them, devolved chiefly on the shoulders of his very busy wife, and very successfully did she bear it. On one occasion he was discovered poring over Holt's *Care and Feeding of Children*, and it was concluded that now he was preparing to assume a larger share of the home burdens; but no, he was culling excerpts to be translated into the Magyar tongue and published in the only Hungarian paper in America. For similar services the Ukrainian press was frequently indebted to his knowledge and interest.

Then came the crowning activity of his very busy life, and one from whose exacting burdens even his stalwart constitution did not escape without a heavy penalty; for there can be little doubt that his two years of unsparing service resulted in a shortening of his days. On September 17, 1930, in St.

Principal and Moderator

Andrew's Church, London, Ont., he was unanimously chosen Moderator. This highest office in The United Church had been held by three very gifted predecessors, Dr. George Pidgeon of Bloor Street United Church, Toronto, one of the most beloved pastors in all Canada; Dr. James Endicott, for many years the highly esteemed Secretary of Foreign Missions in the Methodist Church and now in The United Church, and possessed of singularly persuasive eloquence, and finally the retiring Moderator, Dr. Gunn, for long the accepted leader among the Congregationalists, the wielder of a facile pen, the author of one or two most stimulating books, and selected at the time of Union to be editor of *The Missionary Record*; but alas for him also, the burdens of office had proved too heavy and, only a few days after he had laid aside these responsibilities, the whole Church was shocked and saddened by the news of his sudden demise. It was to these eminent men that Dr. Oliver in spiritual succession added his powerful personality.

While he was chosen for his outstanding gifts and exceptional services, the Church had also in mind an earnest desire to help the West in every way it could, and surely no better way could have been suggested than by appointing its acknowledged leader to this supreme office; and subsequent events have proved how providential was this choice. For at that time the West bulked very largely in the national and ecclesiastical vision of Canada. The

The Life of Principal Oliver

rapidity of its growth has already been described, but it would be impossible to delineate in detail the complexity of its problems. A half century earlier there were but few people in all Canada who had come from the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, probably not more than two thousand, outside, of course, those who came from the British Isles. But in the decade ending 1891, continental immigration had increased to eighty thousand, in 1901 to one hundred thousand, in 1911 to four hundred and forty-five thousand, though in the decade ending in 1921 it had subsided somewhat to four hundred and twenty thousand. Subsequently, as is well known, the annual influx has been very largely reduced, indeed, almost eliminated, by very severe restrictions. Nevertheless, sufficient foreigners had arrived, Ruthenians, Magyars, Poles, Scandinavians, etc., to make every second man in Saskatchewan a "Non-Anglo-Saxon," and Canada was confronted with one of the greatest experiments in history, the creation of a new people on a vacant terrain. Sixty nationalities, speaking as many tongues, had to be welded into one. No hysterical shrieking against aliens could do this, only a spirit of neighbourliness, only a common but considerate educational policy, only a Church that went out not to proselytize but to create an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual trust, could achieve so desirable an end. The Church addressed herself to this stupendous task, for she believed it to be well worth while. These

Principal and Moderator

so-called "foreigners" had a capacity for hard work very acceptable in a new land, and they brought, besides, other racial gifts that would enrich Canada. But, alas, the Church's resources were all too inadequate. Indeed, they were quite insufficient to follow our own English people to their new homes springing up along the branch lines that were being opened up everywhere. The impression, however, must not be conveyed that the neglected West was in any danger of becoming pagan, at least immediately. It was threatened with other evils. To quote Dr. Oliver again:

In spite of all that I have written I fear that if the Apostle Paul were to visit Western Canada to-day he would declare in many places, "Ye men of the Prairies, I perceive that in all things ye are too religious." Sec-tarianism is rife upon the Plains. All sorts of religions are scattering literature and broadcasting messages. As soon as our students leave their summer fields the sects strive to take possession under the specious claim that they do not believe in "paid clergymen." With profound fervour and the shallowest theology they preach "four-square" and other geometrical types of Gospel and seriously divide the religious life of the sparsely settled frontier.

It was with all this in mind that the whole Church, carrying the burden of the West, imposed upon Dr. Oliver the responsibilities of the Moderatorship at a critical period, and he far more than met her utmost anticipations by the extraordinary

The Life of Principal Oliver

work which he accomplished. The aims, which he so faithfully pursued, are admirably expressed in a report of a speech in his "home town" of Chatham:

I love the West and the West loves the East. I am going to do the best I can during my term as Moderator of The United Church to make the East understand the West and the West understand the East; because we are not only The United Church of Canada, but The United Church in a United Canada. You people in the East need the West and the West knows that it needs you. It is not the steel rails of the railway that bind us together. It is the ties of kinship, the ties of religion and the ties of a great United Church. The United Church without Canada would have been impossible, but Canada without The United Church would have been impoverished.

These aims so firmly enunciated in the opening days of his Moderatorship were to find unexpected and stern fulfilment ere his term of office drew to a close. Seldom has a Moderator been called upon to face such unforeseen calamities and seldom has any one met them with finer courage and resolution, so that again and again the text arose to many a Western preacher's lips, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" To begin with, the "Depression" was casting its deepening shadow over the farm life of the land. Prices had tumbled in a way that first stunned and then stirred the mind with bitter feelings of injustice and cries for relief and redress.

Principal and Moderator

One farmer received fifty cents for a cart-load of barley, another threshed his crop, sold it, filled a car with low-grade wheat and then struck his balance sheet, to discover that, instead of reaping any profit, the whole transaction had netted him a loss of three dollars and fifty cents. A large dealer in wheat at Winnipeg remarked to the writer about that time that he was ashamed to buy grain from farmers in certain areas for, when they deducted the costs of transportation, there would be only fifteen cents a bushel remaining for them. Dr. Oliver in a pathetic speech declared: "There are lonely hearts on the frontier. There will be children that will have to go without shoes this winter." The Church could not rectify economic conditions, at least not at once; she could not control world markets, but she could stir the sympathy of the human heart, and she could bring courage and consolation until a more equitable adjustment brought back again happier days. Yet even the consolations of the Church were being denied.

There is nothing so cold as an empty house on a bleak prairie. There is no house so cold as an empty manse, and no manse so inhospitable as a manse that has been shut up. Yet twenty-nine manses have had to be closed in one district. There was not money enough to run them. In one place there are over three hundred families in the district and no minister to serve them. We have had to remove ministers and student preachers because there was no money to support them. . . .

The Life of Principal Oliver

These manses in Saskatchewan would have stayed open if the people of Canada had given as much as a postage stamp a day.

These were the unvarnished words of the Moderator, and with this and similar appeals to the resources of the Church he made his first strenuous moderatorial trip across the Dominion. The mere record of the places that he visited and the speeches he delivered would beggar the tale of even the liveliest politician. On one occasion he remarked to the writer as we sat down at the table together, "This is my fourteenth banquet in sixteen days." But his passionate appeals were not in vain. The Church was aroused to a greater sense of its obligations. Not alone the West, but Foreign Missions, Education, every department of Christian activity felt the fillip his eloquence produced.

The first year of his moderatorial rounds, strenuous though it was, really only paved the way for the stupendous task that awaited him, when the spring of 1931 broke over vast areas of the West, completely dried up and desolate from the previous summer's drought, and with no hope of relief. Here is his own terrible description, written in pencil on C.N.R. paper on his journey East, when he went like a flame of fire through city, town and village; or rather, when, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, he was followed back by strings of cars with vegetables, fruit, bales of clothing, and all that sympathy and self-sacrifice could send:

Principal and Moderator

The first glimpse of the Prairies in the dried-out area frightened me. It left me weak and sore afraid, as though I had turned the corner on our street, eager and expectant to catch a glimpse of home, and found it wrecked by a bomb or burned to the ground by an incendiary. "An enemy hath done this," was the thought that leaped to my mind, as though the devastating hand of a malignant spirit had waved a wand over the great Plains to spread desolation and drouth and death. The vials of its wrath had made a desert. Gone were the green fields of waving wheat, gone the luscious verdure of luxuriant oats, gone the great acres of billowy barley and the lighter tints of rolling restless rye. No wild rose or prairie flower brightening the edges of the trails, no stretches of virgin plain quivering with tawny grass, no foliage on tree or shrub, not even the graceless weed or prickly thistle to meet the eye with refreshing green. But sand, wide-reaching sand, powdered soil shifting relentlessly, wind-whipped, sun-scorched, cutting as with a razor tender roots that dared to try to grow, sand, blighting, blasting, blinding, blowing, torturing and tormenting, blistering lip and searing vision in the sun that blazed with heat but was powerless to penetrate with its light the darkness of the dust-laden air. Here and there as spectres of ruined towns rose the gaunt mockery of grim elevators to remind men of unfulfilled hopes and labours lost, to taunt them with the futility of all their human efforts and the meaninglessness of all their cunningly-contrived machinery, even in a fruitful land with fertile soil, even in my so richly blessed Saskatchewan, if God does not open the windows of His heavens to send rain upon a parched land. At least this we have learned on the Great Plains, that for all our cleverness, and for all our internal-combustion engines, we are still dependent on the Father's goodness. Yes, dependent utterly. The lesson has been such as to bring

The Life of Principal Oliver

tears and to drain the heart. The Prairies as we had known them, had loved them, had boasted them—familiar, friendly, fertile—have become strange and gaunt, naked and barren, stripped even of weeds, too bare for grasshoppers, bereft of singing birds, a land where cattle died for want of drink and horses were shot, but a land where babies still come in the ceaseless human urge of love, where men must yet work and women weep. For I have come to know this that there are hidden resources within the soul whereby men and women refuse to yield till they have borne their cross, however strange and heavy. There is hope even in the desert, in the goodness and sureness of God's covenant to send seed-time and harvest. There is trust. There is trust in His promise to make glad the solitary place even on the Western plains and to cause the dried-out area once more to blossom and rejoice as the wild prairie rose that gladdens the trails of my own Saskatchewan.

As I came through the mountains recently I saw a rainbow on the hills. Hope still lives. Love still rules in the heights. We must lift up our eyes above the swirling, blinding dust to the everlasting unmoved Hills, from whence cometh our Help. Our help cometh from the Lord, sure and sufficient. He will not suffer our foot to be moved from his high purpose and His loving care. He that keepest Israel will keep our Western folk in the trail that leads to the New Day that lies ahead; even in and for cruelly-tried Saskatchewan whose name, meaning "Living Waters," is a prophecy and a promise that neither death nor dust nor any other creature can finally conquer men whose souls in a parched land are already showing that they thirst for that Living Water that springeth up and will never fail.

The "depression" has not been overcome as these pages are being written. Markets are not yet

recovered nor prices restored, but the clouds have lifted a little and seem to be lifting, and the spirit of man, which will never accept absolute defeat, since "hope springs eternal in the human breast," is learning to make new adjustments. But the shadow of those terrible days is still upon the West. The value of the prairie crop had dropped from five hundred million dollars to one hundred and twenty-five million dollars. The banks could not lend other people's money. There was no security. A farmer, worth before the drouth over fifteen thousand dollars, lost his barns through lightning. Nothing was left for his family of three but a cow. No one could give him any money. The situation was desperate. Then he came to The United Church minister, who shared fifty dollars with him out of his own meagre salary. But the ministers themselves could barely live. Oftentimes ten to fifteen dollars a month was all that they would receive. The pitiless heavens continued like brass. Since 1928 around Regina rain had not fallen sufficiently to go two inches into the ground. Horses were offered from one to six dollars apiece, and, if there were no buyers, they were shot. Cattle were shipped into the North country. Dr. Oliver told an audience:

From Regina, I went one hundred and twenty-three miles before I saw a field at all; thousands of acres just as bare as that aisle. In thousands of acres not a weed, not a prickly thistle had grown. In hundreds of miles,

The Life of Principal Oliver

not an elevator shipping a single bushel. Dust storms. (And no one who heard the Moderator in these moving appeals will ever forget his description of the wind, the pitiless wind.) One little closed school collected inside two hundred and ten pounds of dust that had seeped through the windows. I went sixteen hundred miles around, and in thirteen hundred miles saw only one threshing outfit. No gardens, no potatoes, no crops. One family had a meal of stewed gophers, and another two meals of Russian thistle.

Of course, the Provincial Government came as quickly as possible to the rescue, but the calamity was far beyond its resources. Then the Dominion hastened to its assistance. But behind all government aid Canada witnessed one of the finest spectacles it has ever seen. Over the slender thread of rails that connected the West with the East there came toiling long train-loads of cars, laden with gifts which willing hands stretched out toward the suffering brethren on the dried-up plains. Some were filled with vegetables, for had not the Moderator told them of a lady in one district who had the only garden. She had planted in it tomatoes and tried to protect them with tin cans, but the wind had scattered these. Of all the garden, but one tomato remained. "So last night," she added, "my husband and I ate the garden." Then, dramatically, the Moderator pointed to whole fields in Ontario where tomatoes were being ploughed in, to gardens where cucumbers rotted, and orchards where fruit was never plucked. Next morning the

Principal and Moderator

community were carrying these precious gifts to the railway station, where they were loaded upon freight cars and, thanks to the generous sympathy of the railway companies, they were transported free of charge over these thousands of weary miles and deposited at last in the most grateful hands our country has ever known. From town to town, city to city, Dr. Oliver travelled until at Sydney the ocean checked his journey, and ever as he went his progress was marked by this spontaneous movement of generous freight cars westward. Nor was this Christian sharing confined to The United Church by any means, though naturally from its large interest in the West and from the persuasive eloquence of its gifted Moderator, there fell to it the lion's share of the undertaking. But all denominations poured into one stream their various donations and they were distributed impartially without distinction of race or creed. The Red Cross, too, was most active in this work of relief, and exceedingly valuable because of its long experience. They sent five hundred and fifty tons of garments, packed in twenty-two thousand bales, five thousand tons of fruit and vegetables to augment the government rations, and cash running into hundreds of thousands of dollars for special need, child welfare, maternity, the care of invalids where a larger supply of milk and fuel was necessary. The eight thousand bales handled by The United Church organization alone were valued roughly at two hundred and fifty

The Life of Principal Oliver

thousand dollars. The winter of 1931-1932 descended in the West on a people cared for, clothed and fed. Then Christmas came with its crates of toys from the children of the East, and if ever the Star of Bethlehem shone brightly, it was over these forlorn homes when the little stocking was not found empty in the morning. Speaking for the afflicted areas, the Hon. J. T. M. Anderson, Premier of Saskatchewan, summed up all in these significant words:

The magnificent response of our brother Canadians in the East and elsewhere to our call for help in our drought-stricken areas has been appreciated by us all, and I am sure that in the years that lie ahead, as a result of this beneficence, there will be a spirit and feeling of cordiality between East and West which no passage of time can obliterate.

At the General Council in Kingston, in 1932, Dr. Oliver laid down the burden of office as Moderator amid the applause not only of his brethren in his own communion but of a whole grateful Dominion.

CHAPTER IX

CLOSING DAYS

*He gave his honours to the world again,
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the special responsibilities of the Moderator's office were laid aside, Dr. Oliver again resumed those unending tasks which his "beloved West" was always demanding of him.

His literary labours were also multiplying. He felt the need of rescuing from oblivion precious historical documents, ere it was too late, documents that would be indispensable to future generations, if these were adequately to understand the pioneer problems of Saskatchewan and to say appreciatively: *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*. Accordingly, temporary archives were provided, and these documents arranged and classified. His pen, too, was never idle. He was so conspicuous a figure on the platform and in the pulpit that his labours at his desk may too easily be overlooked. Most readers will be surprised at the mere catalogue of his literary productions:

Roman Economic Conditions in the Republic; The Canadian North-West, Its Early Development and Legislative Records (2 vols); *The Country School in Non-English-Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan; The History of Liquor Legislation in the Prairies; Tracts for Difficult Times; The Winning of the Frontier; Social Achievements of the*

The Life of Principal Oliver

Christian Church; His Dominion of Canada; Beaver Lodge. Two other of his most valuable contributions are: *Saskatchewan and Alberta General History, 1870-1912* (in "Canada and Its Provinces," vols. 19, 20); *Settlement of the Prairies, 1867-1914* (in "The Cambridge History of the British Empire").

In addition he rarely failed to contribute a paper to each meeting of Section Two of The Royal Society of Canada, of which he was a Fellow and a Past President of his Section.

Of all these numerous publications, the widest read was *His Dominion of Canada*, being adopted as a textbook by missionary organizations. Possibly the one which he prized highest, which bore the strongest mark of originality, and which expressed most fully his attitude toward the problems of history, is *The Winning of the Frontier*. Reference has already been made to its dominant idea, that the struggles of the "Frontier" are the influential factor in the progress of civilization, an idea that can hardly be expected to receive ready endorsement from writers in the cloistered studies of the Old World, but one that will stir the interest of all born on the American Continent. It may be that he overloads his pages with facts, forgetful that all readers do not possess the tremendous energy of his own spirit; but these facts are very skilfully arranged and one does not fail to see the wood from the multiplicity of the trees. The playful sparkle that lit up so many of his platform speeches, and that the

public had come to expect from him, is too much subdued by the tense earnestness of his pages.

Canada was not slow in recognizing the exceptional value of his work. Honorary degrees were conferred upon him by the universities of Queen's, Toronto, and Saskatchewan, while Emmanuel Theological College at Toronto, and Pine Hill Divinity Hall in Halifax, made him a Doctor of Divinity. His portrait was painted and hung in St. Andrew's College. It was on that occasion, with a sly glance at many of his noted friends who had gathered to do him honour, that he remarked: "There are many others here, who, more than I, deserve to be hung!"

So the days slipped past, their moments packed with never-ending duties. But human endurance has its limits, though these were veiled behind the eager spirit of the man. The Moderatorship had left its mark. Mrs. Oliver writes:

Except that my husband was warned after his term as Moderator that his heart was slightly enlarged, we had no warning that anything sudden might happen. He himself said that he had felt better this year than he had for three years. The doctors told him he might live twenty more. He walked before breakfast every morning, crossing certain bridges; and I had been going with him for the last two months, because I saw it seemed to please him so. . . . He had almost completed a history of the Church for the Province, and had arranged before he left for camp to have in the rest of the material by the end of August.

The Life of Principal Oliver

It was at this camp, surrounded by those young people in whom he so much delighted, and to whom in return he meant so much, that "the Messenger" came; and the "token" was the same as He brought to Bunyan's Pilgrim, "an arrow with a point sharpened with love, let easily into the heart." Mrs. Brandon has written the sad details.

And now I must tell you of Dr. Oliver's passing. After lunch we had camp council, at which he was present. Then groups of the young people wanted photos, snaps of all the leaders and autographs. I was standing next to him in the group, and he handed me three one-cent stamps of a letter he had just received, with the joke, "You are collecting stamps, aren't you?" Then he went off to the house where the leaders roomed, which is about two blocks away. I signed two autographs and followed in just a few minutes. I wanted to finish the routine of the course and so went upstairs. His room door was open, most unusual, and there came a sound of heavy breathing. I called, "Dr. Oliver, are you ill?" There was no response. I ran for the nurse and Mr. Milligan, but, in spite of hypodermics, the pulse faded and he was gone.

Mrs. Brandon adds that he gave a triumphant account of the Church on the night before, and closed his lectures on the day of his death with the declaration, "I would rather be a minister of God, even in an obscure place, than be Prime Minister of Canada." These were not words of idle rhetoric on his lips, for those who were in his secret knew that he had been approached by leaders in the

West to go into politics. He had the gifts that guaranteed success. But the War convinced him that, more than anything else, this battle-scarred world needed the healing power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These last public utterances of his express therefore a very real judgment and decision of his life.

Dr. Oliver had continued his love of the classics through his strenuous and exciting life, and in a tiny volume in his study, entitled, *Selections from the Discourses of Epictetus*, his sister, Mrs. Floyd, found this passage carefully marked:

Do not you know that both sickness and death must overtake us? At what employment? The husbandman at his plough, the sailor on his voyage. For my part I would be taken engaged in nothing but in the care of my own faculty of choice. . . . Let death overtake me while I am thinking, while I am writing, while I am reading such things as these.

So was it with Dr. Oliver, taken in the pursuance of the faculty of his choice.

From all across Canada came tender and touching tributes from all classes and from all creeds, from leaders in Church and State, which, alas, it is not possible to print from lack of space. Let the *Winnipeg Free Press* speak for all:

A true minister of religion who never had a church, but who influenced the people of his own communion in Canada more deeply than any other clergyman of his

The Life of Principal Oliver

time, a devoted public man who was never in the legislature, but who knew his own Province of Saskatchewan better and did more for it than any other citizen, such is the judgment passed by his Church associates in this city on the crowded career of Dr. Oliver, whose life came to so tragic and unexpected a close Thursday last.

In the Church the high point came when in London, in 1930, he was chosen as Moderator, the highest honour in the gift of the organization. The election gave him an opportunity for two years of a much wider service, and also undoubtedly killed him, or, at least, greatly shortened his life. Physicians warned him that even he, a man of somewhat rugged build, could not continue his self-assumed task of incessant and public speaking. There was, however, no let up in his term as Moderator, and his service of intense activity was continued during the following years, resulting in the deplorable event of his death at the age of fifty-three.

In his last address to his last graduating class are these words, from a heart that has had its own wrestlings and where Faith has overcome, words not unneeded in those stern days when the Church is passing through so many trials:

I know that you will bring courage to your pilgrimage, I believe that we can count on your entire devotion. But in your lonely hours and in obscure stations, from time to time you may be shaken in your conviction that you are making a worth-while contribution. We can do without the reward, and we can do without the glory; but we cannot do without the assurance that the struggle in which we are engaged is a real fight, and a fight that counts, and that our pilgrimage will help build the City of God.

The Bible in the World

My Mother's Bible

By the Right Rev. Edmund H. Oliver, D.D., Ph.D., F.R.S.C.

Moderator of the United Church of Canada

This is the substance of an address delivered by Dr. Oliver at the annual meeting of the North Saskatchewan Auxiliary.

ON Christmas morning there hung on the Christmas tree in my home a little parcel neatly wrapped in ribbon and white tissue paper. When I opened it, the tears started to my eyes. The magic wand of memory rolled back the long years, as I looked at an old familiar leather-covered volume. It was my mother's Bible sent me from my sister. She wrote:

"I feel you ought to have this Bible, which you will recognize as Mother's. I have forgotten the name of the minister who married mother and father, but I do know he gave it to them as a wedding present. Mother gave it to me many, many years ago because I liked it and used to love the sort of pocket inside the cover. . . . I feel that Mother would like you to have it, in your present position particularly, so I pass it on to your keeping. Some of the heavy marks are old ones of mine, but I like to feel that she made the one in 2 Timothy iv.—and I am sure you will too."

And there it stands, after all these years, that mark against those verses, a message to me from the little mother who has long since gone home: "I

charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the Word."

As I read those challenging words I could hear again the evening breeze sighing in the leaves of the apple trees of the old Ontario orchard, and I could glimpse once more the light of the old farm lamp shining on that dear face "which I have loved long since and lost awhile." I could almost feel the gentle touch of the vanished hand, and I was sure that the voice that is now for ever still, if it could but speak, would after all these years, have the same message for her country boy—who now carries heavier responsibilities—"Preach the word, my boy, Preach the word. Be instant in season, out of season."

It was no ordinary book, that Bible of my mother's. It was the Gibraltar of her faith. It was the source of her heart's strength. She had learned from it how to tithe her little income from eggs and butter. She had gathered from that same leather-covered book the mission spirit that ever burned



Photo: Henry Irving.

My Mother's Bible

brightly within her soul. She knew where to get a verse for every difficulty and a line for every grief. She told me once how in a great crisis she sat through the long hours of the night in the old log home on the concession expecting me as a little lad each moment to pass away. There must be one of the passages somewhere there marked for her strengthening on that very night, if I could only find it. To her the Book meant life, life that was victory over sin, victory over death, and what is sometimes harder to achieve, victory over self. Above all, for her the Book meant the only sure and safe guidance for her girls and boys.

THAT is how I like to think of the Bible. I know there are beautiful volumes in the old monasteries and illuminated editions in great libraries, and stately copies in majestic cathedrals, but the Bible never seems to me so beautiful as when, however humble, it is fulfilling the noble function of a devotional book in a Christian home. And it has never seemed to me, at least, that men mar it when they have marked it in those places where their souls have drunk of the brook by the way and found rest and refreshment in their pilgrimage. I recall that old Hesselbacher tells how in the eighteenth century his great-grandfather underlined his family Bible in four different colours: black, blue, red and gold.

Black—what touched the sin of my heart.

Blue—what inspired me to good.

Red—what comforted me in sorrow.

Gold—what promised me the grace of God in eternity.

HE would have massive genius as a historian who could describe with sympathetic understanding and adequate detail what Ernst von Dobschütz has portrayed in only briefest outline, namely, the influence of the Bible upon civilization.

The Bible has been a fount of blessing for every high and gracious department of life. Art has been inspired by its stories and its characters, whether the mural paintings of subterranean catacombs or the immortal canvases of the world's greatest galleries! Poetry and Sculpture and Music have all sprung from

the Bible. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the *Messias* of Klopstock derive their inspiration from this living fount of creative power. On this book ecclesiastics and theologians have framed their systems, and reformers have justified their principles and their movements. Its very words have fashioned and ennobled the language of our English speech.

But it never did any of these high and weighty services without men reading it. I presume the Bible is no better than any other book unless men read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it. I fear for the Bible not because of the Fundamentalists nor the Modernists nor the Critic, but because of that deadliest enemy and greatest foe—the man who declines to peruse it. Differ from me as widely as he may, only let him seriously read the Bible—I fear him not. The Old Book will have its way with him in the end, and in God's own good time if he will but listen to its voice, he will come forth refined as gold. But it is ignorance of the Bible that I dread. The Bible Society and the Church and all Christian men of vision must have this project dear to their souls, and urgent upon their hearts for prayer, not merely to spread abroad the Scriptures to every man in his own mother tongue, but, having so translated it and so spread it, to win that very same "every man" to read it with devotion and diligence till it has a chance to win him to its largeness of view, its purity of life and its Christ-likeness of sympathy.

What virtue is there in this old Book that I should plead for a revival of its reading? What was it that my mother found in her Bible, what did she lead me to see in it, that she clung to and that I have never lost in all these years? What was it that comforted her and sustained me, and that I hope to cherish till the end of time? There are, doubtless, other glories and beauties and grandeurs in the Bible. But these are the imperishable and priceless boons of the Book that most impressed my mother, that she taught me to find, and that I shall not soon surrender. They are three:

1. The Power and Sympathy of a Personal God. 2. The Fellowship and Mission of a Divine Church. 3. The Redemptive Love of a Living Christ.

INDEX

- "Basis of Union, The," 124, 125, 126.
 Bexhill, 100.
 Bible, his mother's, 13, 14.
 Blake Scholarship, Edward, 23.
 Bramshott, 100.

 Caledonia Settlement, 4, 5.
 Camp Hughes, 99.
 Chalmers, Rev. Thomas, 34.
 Chaplain's Service, 98.
 Chatham, 18, 19, 20.
 Childhood, 8, 9, 10.
 Church Union, speech in favour of, 85, 86, 87; interdenominationalism as a preparation for, 115, 116, 117; the frontier call for, 118, 119, 120; origins and early perplexities of the movement for, 121, 122, 123; "The Basis of Union," 124, 125, 126; he stresses the spiritual and moral aspects of, 127, 128, 129; the First General Council, 130, 131.
 Classical Training, 23, 39, 41.
 "Clergy reserves," the, 26, 27.
 Collegiate, 19, 20.
 Cowling, Margarita (Mrs. Oliver), 80, 82, 83, 84, 142, 157.
 Currie, Rev. Donald, 8.

 Dalhousie University, the Presidency of, 101, 102.
 Davidson, Mrs. (Principal), 20.
 Death, 158.
 Decision to enter the ministry, 60.
 Degrees conferred by universities, 157.
 "Depression" in the West, the, 146, 147.
 Doctorate, thesis for, 42, 76.

 Draper, Rev. Chas., 40.
 Drought of 1931 in Saskatchewan, 148-154; Assistance rendered by The United Church, 152, 153, 154.

 Emmanuel College, 74.
 Europe, travels in, 82.

 "Family Compact," the, 28.
 First rank in the Province in Classics and Mathematics, 23, 39.
 Fondness for Mathematics, 21, 39.

 Hargrave, Thomas A., 47.
 Haultain, the Hon. Sir Frederick W. G., 73.

 "Khaki University," the, 107.

 Last address to his last graduating class, 160.
 Lecturer, ability as a, 39, 76, 79.
 Lectureship at McMaster, 42.
 Literary productions, 155, 156.

 MacVicar Church, 5, 6.
 Marriage, 83, 84.
 McCulloch, Dr. Thomas, 32.
 Methodism in Upper Canada, success of, 30, 31, 32.
 Moderatorship, the, 143, 144, 145.
 Mother, influence of his, 11.
 Murray, Dr. Walter C., 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 130.

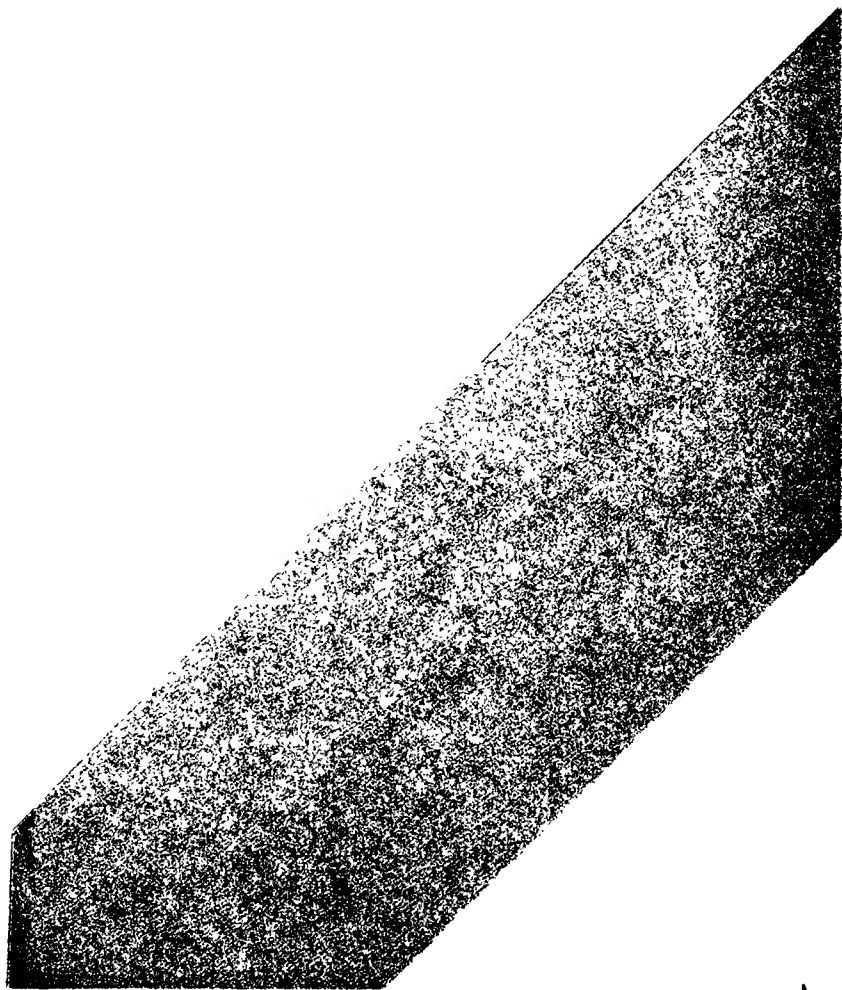
 Oliver, Mrs. (Margarita Cowling), 80, 82, 83, 84, 142, 157.

Index

- Parents, his, 7, 8.
Preacher, his ability as a, 140.
- Queen's University, the principalship of, 100, 101.
- Ryerson, Dr. Egerton, 16.
Religious control of education in Upper Canada, 32-37.
Religious education, his judgment on questions of, 141.
Rural life, his comparison of urban life with, 138.
- St. Andrew's Theological College, Saskatoon, 88, 89, 134, 135, 136, 137.
- Saskatchewan, Drought of 1931 in, 148-154; assistance rendered by The United Church, 152, 153, 154.
- Saskatchewan, The University of, 78, 79.
- Smyrna, the Christian College in, 77.
- Student mind, his influence on the, 139.
- Simpson, Dr. A. B., 7.
Simpson Church, 5, 6, 12.
Simcoe's educational scheme, 33.
- School, 17, 18, 19.
Scholastic attainments and awards, 41.
Science and religion, 51-60.
Spirit of the West, 43, 46, 47.
Strachan, Bishop, 16, 34, 35.
Student missionary, 48, 49, 50.
- Tory, Dr. H. M., 107.
Tributes, 159, 160.
- Vimy Ridge, the University of, 105, 108.
- Walsh, Alberta, 47.
Wark, Miss A. W., 17, 18.
War, attitude of the Church to the, 93-97; outbreak of the, 90, 91, 92; his views on a chaplain's duty in the, 102, 103.
West, education in the, 69, 70; higher education in the, 71-74; immigration to the, 65-68; his journey to the, 44, 45, 46; the spirit of the, 43, 46, 47.
"Winning of the Frontier," the, 44, 112, 113, 156.
Winnipeg as he first saw it, 45.
- Young, Dr. Colin, 136.

[illegible]

#901



922 Mack

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0858 6644